

WA GP Advisory Panel

Meeting Communique

May 2025

Topic One: Bulk billing incentive changes and Urgent Care Clinics expansion

It was noted that the Australian Labor Party was recently elected with an outright majority. Key election commitments put forward included:

- Expansion of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics with six new clinics announced for WA
- Expanding eligibility for bulk billing incentives to all Australians & launch of a new Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program

Members were asked to provide feedback on the impact of these initiatives on their practice and consider support the lead agencies might provide.

Key points from Panel members included:

Bulk billing incentive expansion

- Financial viability: Members noted the incentives don't match private billing income, especially for longer or more complex consultations
- Quality of care: Concerns were raised that the model incentivises short ("six-minute medicine") consultations which may impact the quality of care
- Patient expectations: The potential for confusion and frustration among patients who may be expecting all services to be bulk billed based on current messaging
- Benefits bulk billing practices: The incentives are skewed towards practices that are already 100% bulk billing and may disadvantage mixed-billing practices

- Communication: Members stressed the need for clear public messaging to manage patient expectations and assist front of house practice staff

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics expansion

Members acknowledged that Medicare Urgent Care Clinics (MUCCs) have a place in taking the pressure off general practice, however noted that while some MUCCs triage appropriately, others duplicate general practice services.

Concerns were raised regarding:

- Scope creep with MUCCs handling non-urgent, routine GP work such as scripts
- Impact on GP practices and competition with nearby clinics, especially those open seven days and early in the morning/late in the evening
- Workforce impacts as a result of GPs leaving general practice for better pay and conditions in MUCCs
- Patient confusion and lack of clarity around the differences between private urgent care and Medicare-funded clinics

Members highlighted the need for clearer protocols, ongoing education, and triage guidelines to address and mitigate the impact of the above.

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Topic Two: Firearms Authority Health Assessments

The newly enacted WA firearms legislation includes the introduction of a mandatory Firearms Authority Health Assessment undertaken by a medical practitioner (GP) for all new Firearm Licence applicants, and existing licence holders, repeated at least every five years (annually for those aged 80 years of age and older).

Members were asked to provide feedback on impact on their practice and uptake of health assessments now that the legislation has come into effect.

Feedback included:

- Uptake of health assessments to date was mixed, with some members (and entire practices opting out) and others conducting them as needed as they know their patients well and are comfortable managing any potential risk
- Medico-legal risk, risk to the doctor-patient relationship (particularly in rural locations) and lack of clear guidelines for the assessment were cited as the main reasons for GPs opting out
- It was suggested that comprehensive guidelines (similar to those available for driver's license assessments) may help encourage uptake
- Allowing referrals to other specialists who may be able to conduct health assessments as well as enabling anonymous reporting to flag concerns like doctor shopping were also suggested

- Additional support via a GP support line or similar would be useful to address queries or concerns with the assessment process
- Clarity on how to ensure patient information is accessible and current, particularly for locum GPs conducting assessments or in the event another GP other than the patient's usual GP is asked to conduct the assessment, was cited as an ongoing concern
- Continued advocacy by the lead agencies was recommended to ensure that concerns are raised at the upcoming Standing Commission on Legislation review

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Summary of previous WA GP Advisory Panel meetings (for noting)

WAPHA Medicines Safety: Electronic Prescribing in General Practice (May 2025)

- WAPHA held four special interest sessions (a workshop and three focus groups) in April and May to gain feedback from GPs around electronic prescribing as part of contracted engagement activities in collaboration with the Australian Digital Health Agency. Panel members were asked to provide insight into consumer engagement with electronic prescriptions and Active Script Lists, feedback on how GPs are promoting electronic prescriptions to their patients, the challenges or barriers to promoting and/or using electronic prescriptions in general practice, and suggestions to increase uptake of electronic prescriptions and facilitate discussions between clinicians and consumers.
- It was noted that electronic prescriptions are especially helpful for patients in rural or remote areas, frequent travellers (like FIFO workers), working parents, those receiving care at home or in aged care, and individuals who often lose paper scripts. Additionally, some patients prefer electronic prescriptions over paper prescriptions to help with their organisation/self-management.
- Key benefits to GPs include faster processing, ease of use, remote prescribing (e.g., during telehealth or from home), and greater control.
- Barriers suggested include software issues, token management challenges, digital literacy gaps, patient preferences, resistance to change, and limited awareness of e-prescribing options.
- Recommendations for increasing electronic prescribing uptake included consumer advertising (mainstream TV, social media, practice waiting room media), GP education and awareness campaigns through existing channels around supporting tools for electronic prescriptions (apps and Active Script Lists), raising awareness and facilitating support to pharmacies, and providing resources like trouble-shooting guides to support prescribers, patients and pharmacy when issues occur.

Next steps: This communique will be shared with key staff across the three lead agencies, it will also be posted on WAPHA's website and shared with external stakeholders as part of the WAPHA CEO's monthly Strategic Update.

Please send any suggestions for future agenda topics to nicola.blacker@wapha.org.au

Note: The information contained within this communique represents the views and opinions of WA GP Advisory Panel members only and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of RACGP, RHW or WAPHA.



RACGP
Royal Australian College
of General Practitioners



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Health Alliance**
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