



Medicare position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation's (ANMF) support for Medicare and its expansion to cover dental procedures and other services provided by allied health practitioners. It should be read with the ANMF position statements: *Public and private health services* and *Nurse practitioners*.

2. Definitions

Medicare is Australia's publicly funded universal healthcare insurance system. All Australian citizens; permanent residents; and citizens of countries with whom Australia has a reciprocal health care access agreement who are living in Australia; can enrol in Medicare. Medicare will then pay some of their costs for essential healthcare.

Medicare does not pay for all health services. The **Medicare Benefits Schedule** (MBS) lists the services Medicare pays for.

Medicare also helps make medicine more affordable by subsidising the cost of some medicines. The medicines it covers are listed on the **Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme** (PBS).

A doctor can **bulk bill** a client's appointment costs to Medicare. When a doctor bulk bills, the client doesn't have to pay anything. If a doctor doesn't bulk bill, the client must pay for some of the cost of their appointment.

3. Context

Australia has one of the most efficient health systems in the world, investing around 10.5% per cent of gross domestic product on providing universal healthcare.¹ However, not all essential health care is covered and some health practitioners, including nurse practitioners and midwives with scheduled medicines endorsement, do not have access to the MBS or the PBS.

4. Position

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Equitable access to healthcare is a fundamental right for every Australian.
2. The Australian Government must uphold this right by providing access to free or affordable healthcare for all Australian residents – including people seeking Australian residency – at the time of need, regardless of their capacity to pay.
3. Medicare – Australia's publicly funded universal health insurance system – is the most efficient and effective method for doing this and Australian governments should continue to invest in this system.
4. The Australian Government must expand and improve Medicare by:
 - extending cover to basic dental procedures and other services provided by allied health practitioners

¹ See <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/health-welfare-expenditure/health-expenditure>.



- setting Medicare rebates at a level that ensures bulk billing is provided to all who do not have the capacity to pay
- allowing all nurse practitioners and midwives with scheduled medicines endorsement to access the MBS and the PBS so they can:
 - access Medicare rebates for their services
 - offer their clients rates that are equivalent to those offered by other health practitioners providing the same services
 - ensure their clients receive PBS subsidies for the medicines they prescribe.²

5. Position statement management

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² Nurse practitioners and midwives with scheduled medicines endorsement must prescribe in accordance with all relevant government policies and state and territory laws and regulations.