



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**

Ms Kate Carnell  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian General Practice Network  
PO Box 4308  
MANUKA ACT 2604

Dear Ms Carnell

**DISCONTINUATION OF MEDICARE DENTAL ITEMS FOR PEOPLE WITH  
CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND COMPLEX CARE NEEDS (ITEMS 85011-87777)**

I am writing to confirm the advice provided to the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) by telephone on 26 February 2008 that the Medicare dental items for people with chronic conditions and complex care needs are to be withdrawn from the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). This affects referrals by GPs, and services by dentists, dental specialists and dental prosthetists. We have taken steps to ensure a smooth closure and the completion of treatment for current patients. Details are set out below.

This is the first step in establishing the Government's new Commonwealth Dental Health Program, which will be introduced from 1 July 2008. The Government is replacing the previous Government's limited chronic care dental scheme with a scheme that works cooperatively with States to address public dental waiting lists and provides up to one million additional services.

In introducing the Commonwealth Dental Health Program, the Government will negotiate with the States and Territories to provide priority services to patients with chronic disease, allowing patients who previously qualified for the closing chronic care dental items to access treatment where they are eligible for publicly funded care.

The Government will also fund its election commitment to introduce a new Teen Dental Plan. This program will provide \$150 per person towards an annual preventative check for around 1.1 million teenagers aged 12-17 years in families receiving Family Tax Benefit A, and teenagers in the same age group receiving Youth Allowance or Abstudy. The Department will be consulting with the dental profession about the implementation arrangements for this new program.

## Arrangements for discontinuation of the chronic care dental items

Patients who have already commenced treatment under the chronic care dental items introduced in November 2007 will be able to continue to receive benefits for dental services provided up to and including **30 June 2008**. However, the Medicare dental program will be closed to new patients after **30 March 2008**. A GP referral dated before 30 March 2008 is not, by itself, sufficient for a patient to be considered to have commenced treatment.

The Medicare items will continue to be available to new patients who meet the eligibility criteria up to and including 30 March 2008. However, GPs are encouraged not to refer patients for dental services if the patient cannot commence treatment by 30 March 2008. Patients who have not commenced dental treatment by this date will not be eligible for a Medicare rebate. If the patient has any questions about their eligibility or the discontinuation, they can call Medicare Australia on 132 011.

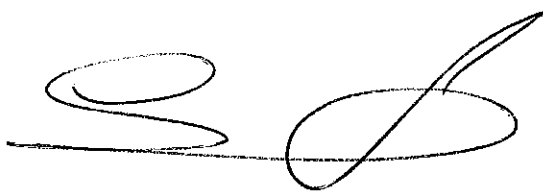
It is important to note that patients can continue to receive GP services under the chronic disease management items (eg GP Care Plans and Team Care Arrangements) and eligible patients can continue to be referred for allied health services. These Medicare items are unaffected by the discontinuation of the dental items.

Further information about the discontinuation arrangements is set out in the attached notice. The Department will be mailing this notice to all GPs. The mailout is expected to occur in the second week of March. Information will also be sent to patients who have received services under the Medicare dental items, dentists, dental prosthetists, and relevant professional groups.

The Department would appreciate your assistance in informing AGPN members about the discontinuation of the chronic care dental items as soon as possible. We would be grateful if you would include these notices in your email lists.

Please contact David Braggett in the Department on (02) 6289 4919 if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely



Lou Andreatta  
Assistant Secretary  
Primary Care Financing Branch

3 March 2008