

Expanding Medicare Access for Rural and Regional Australia

The Coalition Government understands that all Australians deserve access to Medicare, and will expand the current network of Medicare claiming with a further 600 Medicare Easyclaim facilities across the country.

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Labor's Record

No Answers for Rural and Regional Australia

Under Labor, the only access to Medicare was through a small network of Medicare offices concentrated in cities and large towns, denying easy access for millions of Australians.

People living in towns such as Winton, Edenhope, Finley and Tom Price had to travel hundreds of kilometres to get to a Medicare office.

The lack of access to Medicare for these people meant that sometimes people would go months before claiming their Medicare rebate – the Government kept the money in the Treasury in Canberra while it should have been in patients' pockets.

There were only around 270 places to claim a Medicare rebate, and well over half of these were concentrated in Australia's ten biggest cities.

Labor neglected Medicare outside our cities, creating a widening gulf in services between metropolitan and non-metropolitan Australia.

Highlights of the Government's Achievements

Better Access to Medicare for All Australians

The Coalition is working hard to strengthen Medicare for all of us.

We have now introduced a new network of 600 Medicare Easyclaim centres in pharmacies all over the country.

There are towns that now have access to Medicare at their local shopping centre. Around a million Australians in rural and regional areas no longer have to travel hundreds of kilometres to get to their nearest office.

In addition to the introduction of Medicare Easyclaim facilities, the Coalition has significantly improved the proportion of Medicare Customer Service Centres which provide services to rural and regional Australia.

In cities where Medicare offices have closed, there are now up to half a dozen local pharmacies offering Medicare facilities.

More than half the country can now claim Medicare rebates at home,

over the phone.

The Howard Government is even working with GPs to trial Medicare computer claiming right in the doctor's surgery.

With bulk billing levels higher now than in February 1996, and better access for rural and regional Australia, the Coalition is making Medicare stronger.

For better access to Medicare, Australians can't afford to go back to Labor.

Expansion of the Medicare Easyclaim Network

More to be Done

The Coalition will invest a further \$30 million over four years to double the number of claiming facilities across the country.

Another 600 Medicare Easyclaim facilities will be introduced into rural and regional communities, again expanding the options for Australians claiming a rebate from Medicare.

This ease of access will particularly assist the elderly and families, who often experience difficulty travelling large distances to claim their rebate.

The value of these Easyclaim facilities extends beyond the value to people claiming rebates. Other small businesses in town attract customers from the Medicare Easyclaim facility. If a person doesn't need to travel to a larger town to claim on Medicare, and can do it at their local shopping centre, chances are that they will attend to more of their shopping needs locally.

This new expansion of the Medicare Easyclaim network will cost \$30 million over the next four years.

This is just another way that the Liberal and National Parties are making Australia stronger.