

Media Release

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CONSUMERS WELCOME END TO CATARACTS INDUSTRIAL CAMPAIGN



Cost and time savings from new medical technology should be passed on quickly to health consumers, the Executive Director of the Consumers Health Forum, Carol Bennett, said today.

Ms Bennett was commenting on the agreement reached between the Federal Government and the Australian Society for Ophthalmologists announced today that will see a reduction in the Medicare rebate for several services including the most common procedure from \$831.60 to \$731.80 from 1 February 2010.

“The price of consumer electronic devices like mobile phones and computers is declining rapidly as technology advances and competition ensures those savings are being passed on to consumers,” she said.”

“Likewise, new advances in medical technology are helping improve procedural techniques and reduce times.”

Ms Bennett said health costs are rising exponentially and it is a continuing challenge for consumers, industry and government to keep costs at a manageable level.

“CHF believes it was unfortunate that rather than work with Government to pass on cost savings, the ophthalmology industry chose instead to increase gap payments for procedures in order to preserve unreasonable profitability,” she said.

“Consumers recognise the value of professional medical services but are also capable of identifying when there are unreasonable charges in the health system.”

Ms Bennett said consumers supported a rigorous and ongoing review of Medicare payments to ensure that the universal health system survives and that cost benefits from more efficient procedures are swiftly passed on.

“It is unfortunate that many consumers, including senior citizens, were caused unnecessary concern because of an issue that could have been resolved by serious negotiation rather than resorting to an industrial scare campaign.”

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