

## **Brief submission**

I have 35 years working in a variety of health areas, mostly in nursing, clinical tutoring and mental health research. I thus have comprehensive understanding of how private specialists have impacted on the delivery of quality and universal health care. This has occurred since Mr Abbott's 2004 Medicare SafetyNet 'gap' policy, offering all medical specialists un-capped fees i.e. 80% of the difference between Medicare and whatever they wish to charge, which has had an enormous impact on both the delivery of services and the government budget blowout. This policy is not related to, nor part of, the original ideals and purpose of Medicare as was implemented in 1983; and it has massively reduced bulk billing to the neediest patients by encouraging huge increases in fees, thus primarily the rich benefit. In effect it offers 'blank cheques' to private medical providers as no actual 'gap' exists. When introduced by Abbott, 2004, in an election year, groups of medical specialists raised their fees so high that the entire budget was consumed within 3 years, and Abbott's wealthy electorate was noted to be the greatest beneficiary. Numerous submissions and journalist reports argued against this fiscally irresponsible policy 2004 -2009. GPs are now constantly targeted, whilst most do work with the needy and disadvantaged through bulk billing. In addition, the freeze on Medicare indexation to them and allied health is seriously disadvantaging their patients, whilst private medical providers reap the largess of un-capped fees - an enormous burden borne by the government/tax payers. Surely, when the budget deficit is so big, the government should be considering placing a 'cap' on all fees in the private sector, which hopefully would stem the huge and un-limited fee increases and extend services to many more desperate patients locked out of the system.

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