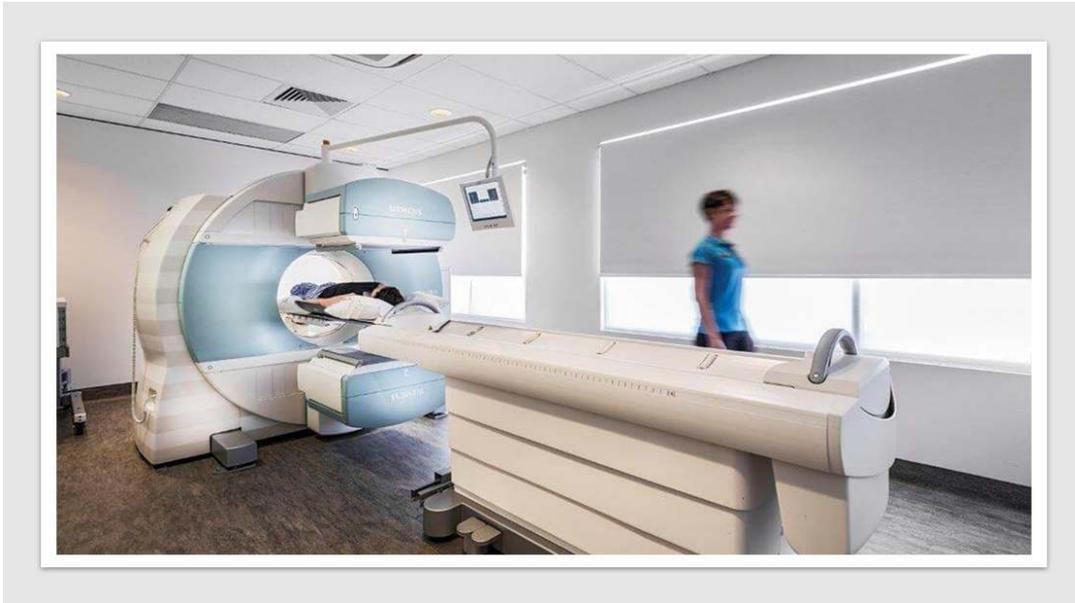


AANMS calls for MBS indexation to be restored for nuclear medicine



MedTech News: The Australasian Association of Nuclear Medicine Specialists (AANMS) recommends that the Australian Government urgently restores MBS indexation for nuclear medicine after a 23-year freeze.

In its 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission, the AANMS has asked for a commitment from government to address the significant funding gap in nuclear medicine, to reduce out-of-pocket costs for consumers and ensure ongoing access to crucial nuclear medicine services.

“Nuclear medicine is a crucial clinical tool, which can be used to both diagnose and treat patients with a range of conditions including most significantly cancer but also dementia, childhood illnesses, heart disease and thyroid disease to name a few.” said AANMS President, Dr Geoff Schembri.

“Australia is a recognised world leader in this field but this is in jeopardy as inadequate funding undermines the speciality’s ability to provide services and maintain important, ongoing research.”

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“After 23 years without indexation of MBS rebates, and the significant growth in service and radiopharmaceutical costs over that time, nuclear medicine is at a pivotal point. The cost gap is already unsustainable and, as noted by the MBS Review Taskforce, is impacting on the accessibility and availability of nuclear medicine services.”

The MBS rebate freeze was initially imposed on all MBS services in 1998. Since then, inflation has risen 58%. In recent years the government has committed to restore indexation for all other imaging modalities, but nuclear medicine remains frozen. There is no justifiable reason for its exclusion.

“On average, one in two Australians will require nuclear medicine during their lifetime. Our services are vital for some of the most unwell people in the community, and we do not want to see a rise in out-of-pocket costs for these patients or a reduction in service availability,” said Dr Schembri.

“The cost of restoring indexation for these procedures is small, but it would make a huge difference to so many Australians. The field is evolving rapidly, particularly in areas like precision cancer treatment (theranostics), but we need adequate funding to ensure its sustainability and development,” said Dr Schembri.

Through its Pre-Budget Submission and ongoing advocacy, AANMS is seeking to bring nuclear medicine in line with other medical services funded under the MBS, by reinstating indexation so that rebates keep pace with inflation.