



AACP
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION
OF CONSULTANT PHYSICIANS

30 June 2022

GOVERNMENT'S DECISION REMOVES ACCESS TO PHONE CONSULTATIONS

The Federal Government today decided not to extend access to telephone consultations for patients of consultant physicians and paediatricians.

AACP President Terry Stubberfield, a rural paediatrician, said: "This decision will have a major impact on many patients – the elderly, the immuno-compromised such as patients undergoing cancer treatment, those with chronic conditions, those living in rural and remote areas – for various reasons these patients will be the most disadvantaged due to their lack of internet, their inability to use the technology, the need to travel long distances, or the need to avoid crowded situations and travel if at all possible."

"From tomorrow our patients will have fewer options for consultations with their physicians, paediatricians and medical specialists – we hoped that the Minister would permanently reinstate the items."

"The Minister's comments in today's press conference were about GP consultations; he made no reference at all to physician and paediatrician consultations – so the concern remains that there has not been adequate consideration by the new Government of the important role of telephone consultations in the delivery of medical services by consultant physicians and paediatricians.

"We welcomed the rapid introduction of phone consultations at the beginning of the pandemic because they supported the continued provision of medical care in the community. However, it is clear that the impact of COVID has not diminished – already this year there have been 7.5 million cases of COVID in Australia, hundreds are in hospital every day and there have been thousands of deaths."

"The importance of telephone consultations in ensuring medical care continues to be delivered to patients while protecting them from infection cannot be underestimated, but this has also supported continued service by doctors who may have very mild COVID symptoms but must remain in mandatory isolation."

The AACP is concerned that the removal of telephone consultations will lead to cancelled appointments and an increase in missed appointments by patients who have embraced the availability of telephone consultations when a face-to-face consultation isn't essential and now expect the option of video, telephone and face-to-face consultations will continue.

The AACP believes there needs to be formal consultation between Government, the medical profession and patient groups to enable the reasoning for this decision to be clarified and for the issues to be fully explored. The AACP seeks to work with Government and other key organisations to undertake such further review to ensure equity of access to medical services. Our patients will expect no less.

MEDIA RELEASE

About Australian Association of Consultant Physicians (AAPC)

The Australian Association of Consultant Physicians (AAPC) represents all consultant physicians and paediatricians to assure recognition of the value of quality consultant physician and paediatric practice in Australia.

More information available at: www.aapc.org.au

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