



Australian Government
Department of Health

Dr Debra Graves
Chief Executive Officer
Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia
207 Albion Street
SURREY HILLS NSW 2010

Provision of COVID-19 pathology tests

Dear *Debra* Dr Graves

I am writing to you regarding the restrictions on billing Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for employment-related COVID-19 pathology testing.

The Australian response to pathology testing for COVID-19 is a joint effort between the Australian Government, States and Territories and the private sector. Australian capability and capacity to test for COVID-19 is strong and Australia maintains one of the highest rates of testing internationally.

The strategy for pathology testing is under constant review by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), which provides advice to the National Cabinet. Currently, the agreed approach to testing for COVID-19 is focussed on testing people with symptoms who present for testing.

On 24 April, National Cabinet agreed to expand testing criteria to include all people with mild COVID-19 symptoms nationally. The next phase of Australia's approach will enhance our focus on capturing an increased number of symptomatic people (those with acute respiratory symptoms) for testing.

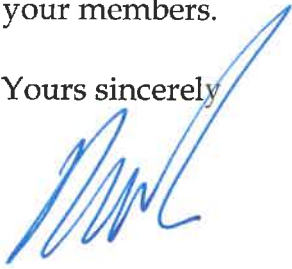
To bolster the testing strategy, Medicare rebates for COVID-19 pathology tests apply where a medical practitioner has determined that it is clinically necessary for a patient to get a COVID-19 test and requests the test from a pathologist.

The general Medicare rule remains that Medicare rebates do not apply to any pathology tests conducted as a condition of employment where these tests are not required for the treatment of the patient. In these circumstances, it is expected that the employer will cover the full costs of the tests.

This means that MBS benefits are not payable to a person for a COVID-19 pathology test that has been paid by the employer of that person, or for a COVID-19 pathology test that is required for employment purposes only.

I trust this information is of use and encourage you to share this information with your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DMC', is written over the 'Yours sincerely' text.

Daniel McCabe
First Assistant Secretary
Provider Benefits Integrity Division

7 May 2020