

unemployed and children under 16 are exempt from their “optional co-payment”, they know that GPs will cease bulk-billing under the financial pressure. There will be no bulk-billing doctors for concessional patients to see.

The Abbott government has so far completely failed to get its co-payment plans through parliament. However, there will be more attacks. His government is currently consulting with The Australian Medical Association and trying to stitch up a new Co-payment “Plan C”.

Keep Medicare Fully Funded

- Fund Medicare through progressive taxation

We need to push back against the Liberal’s war on bulk-billing with a war on their ‘user pays’ approach. Funding GP care through taxation—where wealthy individuals and businesses pay more—is the most equitable, cost-effective and efficient system. Australians already pay the second highest rate of out of pocket costs in the OECD representing 18.3% of the total health spend. Evidence shows that the high costs of medications and specialist fees already force 12% of people to delay or avoid the care they need. Increasing co-payments will compound this situation and drastically increase health costs when more people end up hospitalised.

We should be expanding Medicare to include dentistry and reduce out-of-pocket specialists costs and expensive medications. Progressive taxation, not co-payments, is the fairest most efficient way to do this.

JOIN SAVE MEDICARE SYDNEY

“Get in touch with the campaign and help us get the message out in your workplace or community”

Email: savemedicaresydney@gmail.com

Website: savemedicare.org

Facebook: [savemedicaresydney](https://www.facebook.com/savemedicaresydney)

Phone Jean on 0449 646 593

Save Medicare

Stop Abbott’s GP Co-payment

“Plan B”

FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

12.30pm Wednesday 4th March

Meet ‘Save Medicare’ at the water feature
Top of Martin Place, Macquarie St

FORUM

Keep Medicare Universal, Public and Fair!

Speakers

- Jean Parker - Save Medicare Sydney
- Dr Ben Spies-Butcher - Academic
- Annette Aldrick (Delegate) - NSW Nurses and Midwives’ Association

5.30pm Wednesday 4th March

Training Room 1, Ground Floor, Trades Hall,
enter via 377 Sussex Street

Medicare is still threatened

Abbott's attack on Medicare in the May budget proved to be a nightmare for the government throughout 2014. The proposed \$7 GP co-payment was understood across the community for what it was: an attack on the universal nature of the Medicare system. Save Medicare Sydney alongside numerous nurses, GPs, unions and community groups protested and campaigned and kept the pressure on.

As a result in December the government dropped its 'Plan A' \$7 co-payment. But at the same time it announced a tricky 'Plan B' attack on Medicare designed to do the same thing. One part of the new policy was "pulled off the table" in early January 2015 when GPs threatened national rallies. But two parts of the new policy remain.

In June the government's \$5 cut to the Medicare rebate for all non-concessional GP visits will begin. The rebate going to patients and bulk-billing GPs will go down from \$37 down to \$32. Doctors will be "allowed" to charge bulk-billed patients the \$5 co-payment. On top of this Health Minister Sussan Ley is freezing the indexation increases for the Medicare rebates for another 3 years. By 2018 this will amount to another \$3 cut from the rebate for each GP visit.



Keep Medicare Public

- No to the privatisation of Medicare processing

In August 2014 the Liberal government sought expressions of interest from private companies to buy a privatised Medicare processing system. This would see the national payment system that delivers Medicare rebates online and at Medicare offices and is connected to our health records, sold to for-profit mega information companies like Eftpos or Serco. This would gut the workforce that has made Medicare such a reliable public service.

The Liberal government has been clear in its support for the private health insurance industry entering into the GP sector. A "trial" in QLD has seen Medibank Private all-but employing GPs. Health insurance companies have been allowed to tender for the new version of Medicare Locals.

Yet the GP sector run by private health insurance companies in the United States has created one of the most expensive and worst performing health systems in the developed world.

Keep Medicare Universal

- Bulk-billing for all, no GP rebate freeze

The government knows a \$3 to \$5 cut will be enough to decimate bulk-billing rates and push the cost of health onto workers and the poor. As John Howard's Health Minister, Tony Abbott oversaw the reduction of bulk-billing rates to 60 per cent of visits, simply by freezing Medicare rebate indexation rises. But now the Liberals are again trying to drive a stake through the heart of bulk-billing so they can open the GP sector to the profit-making private health insurance companies.

The government knows that GPs cannot stay in business by bulk-billing if the Medicare rebates are cut and frozen. Abbott's "Plan B" policy will lead GPs to either close or move to charging \$40 or much higher co-payments. Even though the government claims pensioners, the