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**ONGOING SUPPORT NEEDED FOR MEDICAL PRACTICES TO
PROCESS ELECTRONIC MEDICARE CLAIMS**

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said today that the increase in electronic Medicare rebate claiming announced by the Government is a good case to introduce ongoing financial support to assist medical practices cover the administrative costs associated with electronic claiming.

Dr Pesce said Medicare Easyclaim had effectively shifted the administrative burden of electronic Medicare claims from Medicare Australia to private medical practice – but with no ongoing compensation for the shift in responsibility for administering the system.

“The AMA is pleased that Minister Bowen has today recognised the considerable work that medical practices are now doing on behalf of Medicare offices around Australia,” Dr Pesce said.

“Medical practices are contributing to significant savings in administration costs for the Government.

“The Transitional Support Package has provided the impetus to almost double the number of participating medical providers and the number of electronic claims made since April this year, but the Package expires on 31 December.

“The AMA is concerned that medical practices will now have no incentive to sign up to or continue with Medicare Easyclaim because there will be no compensation for the costs and extra work involved in doing the work of Medicare Australia.

“The AMA wrote to Ministers Roxon and Bowen in October calling for a new ongoing payment for medical practices for each claim for Medicare benefits they lodge electronically on behalf of patients.

“This was followed up with a repeat call to Minister Roxon from the AMA and other medical groups last month.

“But we have heard nothing.

“We are seeking a process that is consistent with the Government approach to pharmacies, whereby pharmacies receive a 40-cent payment for each prescription they process using PBS Online.

“This would ensure a continued increase in electronic Medicare claiming, and it would allow doctors to be able to continue to provide electronic claiming in their practices.

“It would also provide convenience for patients and create further administrative efficiencies for the Government,” Dr Pesce said.

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