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**AMA CALLS FOR COMMONSENSE TO PREVAIL IN CATARACT SURGERY SENATE STANDOFF**

The AMA today called for the Government and the Opposition to come to an agreement in the Senate on the Medicare rebate payable for cataract surgery – and that agreement must be to keep the rebate at its current level.

AMA President, Andrew Pesce, said that the many Australians who are scheduled to have cataract surgery after 1 November want certainty and security that the procedure will go ahead and how much they will have to pay for the procedure, but neither the Government nor the Opposition is providing that certainty in the current Senate standoff.

“It is time to put petty politicking to one side, and let compassion and commonsense take over,” Dr Pesce said.

“The AMA remains strongly opposed to the Government’s plans to halve the Medicare rebate for cataract surgery.

“It is a flawed and ill-conceived policy based on poor advice about the realities of the procedure in contemporary Australian practice.

“Our recent survey of ophthalmologists proved beyond doubt that the Government has got it wrong.

“The Government must keep the rebate at its current level.”

Dr Pesce said that confusion remains about the effect of the disallowance strategy being pursued by the Opposition and Independent Senators.

“There is legal advice being reported that suggests disallowance of the cataract surgery regulation may result in *no* Medicare rebate at all for patients undergoing this procedure,” Dr Pesce said.

“The AMA does not support this outcome. We do not want to see patients heavily penalised financially or, worse, having their operations put back or cancelled.

“There is only one solution – keep the Medicare rebate at its current level.

“All Senators must put the patients’ interests first and sort this out in a professional and compassionate way,” Dr Pesce said.

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