The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Australian Government Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

14 July 2020

Dear Minister Hunt

RE: Temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers need to be available to all providers of specialist sexual and reproductive health care

Temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers issued during the COVID-19 pandemic have enabled people in Australia telehealth access to a range of sexual and reproductive health services. Many of these services, such as testing for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) treatment and medical abortion via telehealth, are delivered by doctors who provide specialist sexual and reproductive health services.

Telehealth reforms announced on 10 July will roll back temporary MBS item numbers to General Practitioners (GPs) only from 20 July. To be eligible for MBS item numbers, most patients will need to have had a consultation with that GP or practice at least once in the past year. This decision will hinder sexual and reproductive healthcare access in Australia because some patients’ own GPs:

- Work in clinics that do not always offer specialist sexual and reproductive health services
- Have not completed the additional training required to provide specific sexual and reproductive health services
- Conscientiously object to providing sexual and reproductive health services
- Experience a range of challenges in providing accessible services due to a range of access, equity and agency issues.

We ask that you urgently reinstate temporary MBS item numbers to enable access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. In planning future telehealth reforms we ask that you consult with specialist providers in sexual and reproductive health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, migrant and refugee health, disability health, LGBTIQ+ health, sex worker health, women’s health, men’s health, violence and suicide prevention. This will enable us to increase health access, equity and agency for all people in Australia.

Sincerely,

Jamal Hakim, Managing Director, Marie Stopes Australia

Alexis Apostolellis, CEO, Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)
Claire Vissenga, CEO, Family Planning Victoria
Emma Iwinska, CEO, Women's Health Queensland
Hayley Foster, CEO, Women's Safety NSW
Marilyn Beaumont OAM, Chair, Australian Women’s Health Network
Dr Helen Calabretto, Director - Clinical and Counselling Services, SHINE SA
Delia Donovan, Acting CEO, Domestic Violence NSW
Kirsty Garrett, CEO, Doctors on Demand Pty Ltd
Debra Barnes, CEO, Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)
Dianne Hill, CEO, Women’s Health Victoria
Daile Kelleher, Manager, Children by Choice Association
Adjunct Prof Ann Brassil, CEO, Family Planning NSW
Associate Professor Jane Tomnay, Director, Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health, University of Melbourne
Professor Angela Taft, MPH PhD, La Trobe University
Dr Judith Dean, University of Queensland and Co Chair, Australasian Sexual Health Alliance
Dr Nicholas Medland, Kirby Institute University of New South Wales and Co Chair, Australasian Sexual Health Alliance
Denele Crozier, CEO, Women's Health NSW
Tina Dixson, Acting Program Manager, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
Professor Angela Dawson, Public Health Association of Australia
Belinda Halliday, Co-Chair, Embolden SA
Lisa Torney, National Chairperson, Society of Australian Sexologists
Professor Suzanne Fraser, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society
Christine Janet Greenall, Family Planning Welfare Association of NT Inc
Carrie Fowlie, Chief Executive Officer, Hepatitis Australia
Shannon Woodward, President, Australasian Sexual Health and HIV Nurses Association
Adjunct A/Professor Darryl O'Donnell, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations
Rebecca Reynolds, CEO, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health
Heidi La Paglia, Project Officer, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
Nicolas Parkhill, CEO, ACON
Genevieve Dally, Executive Director, Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council
Dr Susan McSweeney, Clinic 66
Ms Sue Salthouse, Didactic Enterprises
Dr Fiona Bisshop, Holdsworth House Medical Brisbane
Janice Nugent, Fertility Control Clinic
Arlyn William Owens, Kirketon Road Centre (SESLHD) & Intensive Love
Dr Heather McNamee, Headspace Cairns
Emeritus Professor Peter Aggleton, PhD, FASSA, Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney
Dr Jacki Mein, Wuchopperen Health Service Ltd
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Gemma Crawford, President, Australian Health Promotion Association
Associate Professor Sharyn Burns, Relationships and Sexuality Education Program, Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact, School of Public Health, Curtin University
Dr Roanna Lobo, Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Applied Research and Evaluation Network, Curtin University
Melanie Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)
Alison Verhoeven, Chief Executive, Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association
Dr Katelin Haynes, CEO, Hepatitis Queensland
Stacey Ross, CEO, The Centre for Women & Co.
Helen Dalley-Fisher, Senior Manager, Equality Rights Alliance
Felicite Black, Womens Health and Family Services
Dr Penny Wood, Alexander Heights Family Practice
Teddy Cook, Vice President, Australian Professional Association for Trans Health (AusPATH)
Brigid Coombe, South Australian Abortion Action Coalition
Amanda Kelly, CEO, Women's Health Goulburn North East
Jessica Elsworth, Health Promotion Officer, Women's Health in the South East
Lynette Denning, Operations Coordinator, Wide Bay Women's Health Centre, Hervey Bay
Jo Flanagan, CEO, Women's Health Tasmania
Sharen Page, economic Security4Women
Dr Catherine Insley, East Sydney Doctors
Ruth Dearnley, CEO, Birth for Humankind
Dr Siobhan Bourke, Siobhan Bourke Sexual Health Consulting
Emma Davidson, Convenor, Women’s Electoral Lobby Australia
Kristine Olaris, CEO, Women’s Health East
Brent Bell, CEO HepatitisWA
Tim Bavinton, Executive Director, Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)
Ms Jennifer Ejlak OAM, Reproductive Choice Australia
Bonney Corbin, Chair, Violence Prevention Australia

The following Medical Doctors:
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Dr Karen Freilich, MBBS, BMedSc, DRANZCOG
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Dr Kamala Emanuel, BMed
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Dr Jacki Mein, FACSHM FAFPHM MAE FRACGP AFRACMA OAM
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Dr Atari Metcalf, BSc, MD
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Dr Nicholas Silberstein, GP
Dr Nicole Filar, MBBS DTMH FRACGP
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Dr Catherine Insley, MBBS FRACGP
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Dr Michelle Guttman-Jones, GP
Dr Victoria Featherston, MBBS, FRACGP, DCH
Dr Clare Holberton, MBBS, MSc Infectious Disease
Dr Melissa Brown, MBBS, FRACGP
Dr Genevieve Coney, MBBS FRACGP
Dr Hilary Bower, MBBS FRACGP
Dr. Vanessa Siu, GP

The following Nurses and Midwives:
Finn Mercury RN/RM
Genevieve Lean, Registered Nurse Educator
Christina Inness, Nurse Practitioner
Ms Fern Pombert, RN
Sue Opie, Sexual Health Nurse
Mrs Chloe Kearns, RN2
Ms Edwina Anne Jachimowicz, RN/RM
Annie Braendler Phillips, RN/M
Kylie Sutton, RN/RM
Associate Professor Jane Tomnay, RN, MHS.c. PhD
Dr Judith Dean, RN, Midwife, BN, MPHTM, PhD, Centaur Fellow
Linda Hunt, RN
Brigid Coombe, RN MNsc
Dr Judith Gonda, B.A.Sc, Nurse Educator, PhD
Sandra Tidswell, Sexual Health Nurse
Sarah Harwood, Nurse Educator and SRH Nurse
Rhonda Newton, RN RM CNE
Sarah Hill, RN/RM
Emma Knowland, Sexual Health RN MN
Kyna Reddan, RN GradCert(SH)
Kitty Smith, MSN, RN
Dr Carl Heslop, RN, MPH, PhD, MAHPA
Anna-Lucia Kenrick, Nurse Educator
Vince Smetana, RN
Jude Armishaw, CNC
Ms Sue Andrews, RN
Joanne Leamh, Sexual Health Nurse
Jacqueline Bunt, RN/RM
Cara Taheny, RN
Arlyn William Owens, Registered Nurse & Psychosexual Therapist
Liz Griffin, RN, BSN
Melinda Hassall, RN MPH
Catherine Bevan; RN Graduate Diploma Community Health Nursing MACN
Bronte Simpson, RN
Jacqualine McLellan, Nurse Practitioner
Ruth Casey, Nurse Practitioner
Elena McLeish, Public Health Nurse
Mr Adam Spinks, Nurse Practitioner
Donna Maria Feiersinger, RN
Monica Vitale, RN/MN/NE/NP
Elizabeth Hanna, RN MN(Women's health) MN(Sexual & Reproductive Health)
Jennifer Macleod RN
Lucy Williamson, Clinical Nurse Specialist in Sexual Health
Lauren Coelli, Sexual Health CNC
Cat Brown, Registered Nurse
Vijeta Venkataraman, RN
Ms Julie Gabriel, RN
Eleanor McHardie, RN
Fiona McKenna RN
Julianne Billing, RN RM MHA
Hilary Freeman RN/RM MHSc(Sexual Health)
Emma Perkins, RN
Lisa Harrison, Reproductive and Sexual Health Nurse Practitioner
Mr Rohan Anderson, Sexual Health and HIV nurse
Jodi Mauro, Reproductive & Sexual Health RN
Cara Taheny, RN
Hilary Freeman, RN/RM MHSc(Sexual Health)
Sherelle Luretigh, Sexual Health Nurse
Ms Megan Taylor, Nurse Practitioner
Faye Salcedo, RN
Sara Bell, RN, BSc (Hons), MPH
Fiona Crawley, RN
Ms Molly McCulloch, RN
Georgina Berry, Registered Nurse
Ms Aleksandra Filipowicz, RM
Stephanie Robertson, RN
Miss Tanisha Tognolini, RN
Alice Park, RN
Miranda Togni, RN
Felicite Black, RN, BA, MBA, GAICD
Julie Byrne-King, RN
Nic Rush, RN
Lisa Bradfield, Nurse Educator
Anne-Marie Cairns RN  
Ms Kate Mason, Clinical Midwife Specialist  
Garry Kuchel, Clinical Nurse Consultant  
Mrs Anita Leonard, RM  
Laura Mathias, RM  
Paul Esplin, CNC  
Arielle Frankel, RM  
Lilian Barson-Frost, RN/RM  
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Aly Alway, Women’s Health Maningrida  
Kaija Talviharju, RN  
Fiona Gerrard, RN  
Colette Cashman, MPH, BSc, RN  
Erika Dalton, RN; Master of Health Studies (Women’s Health)

The following organisations (alphabetical order):
ACON  
Alexander Heights Family Practice  
Anglesea Medical  
Australasian Sexual Health Alliance  
Australasian Sexual Health and HIV Nurses Association  
Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)  
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations  
Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association  
Australian Health Promotion Association  
Australian Injecting & Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)  
Australian Nursing and Midwifery Organisation  
Australian Professional Association for Trans Health (AusPATH)  
Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society  
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)  
Australian Women’s Health Network  
Birth for Humankind  
Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health, University of Melbourne
Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney
The Centre for Women & Co.
Children by Choice Association
Clinic 66
Didactic Enterprises
Doctors on Demand Pty Ltd
Domestic Violence NSW
East Sydney Doctors
Economic Security4Women
Embolden SA
Equality Rights Alliance
Family Planning NSW
Family Planning Victoria
Family Planning Welfare Association of NT Inc
Fertility Control Clinic
Headspace Cairns
Hepatitis Australia
Hepatitis Queensland
HepatitisWA
Holdsworth House Medical Brisbane
Human Rights Law Centre
Illawarra Women's Health Centre
Intensive Love
Kirketon Road Centre (SESLHD)
La Trobe University
Marie Stopes Australia
M Clinic WA
Meridian
New South Wales Health Murrumbidgee Local Health District
Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council
Public Health Association of Australia
Queensland Council for LGBTI Health
Queensland Sexual Health Society
Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Applied Research and Evaluation Network, Curtin University
Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)
Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)
Siobhan Bourke Sexual Health Consulting
South Australian Abortion Action Coalition
Relationships and Sexuality Education Program, Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact, School of Public Health, Curtin University
Reproductive Choice Australia
SHINE SA
Society of Australian Sexologists
True Relationships & Reproductive Health
University of Queensland
Violence Prevention Australia
Wide Bay Women's Health Centre, Hervey Bay
Women's Electoral Lobby Australia
Women’s Health and Family Services
Women’s Health East
Women's Health Goulburn North East
Women's Health Grampians
Women's Health in the South East
Women's Health NSW
Women's Health Queensland
Women's Health Tasmania
Women’s Health Victoria
Women's Health West
Women's Safety NSW
Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
Wuchopperen Health Service Ltd
Your Community Health