



Changes to Sapphire Coast Medical Practice Billing Policy and Fees **From 1 October 2022**

We are sure you are aware that there is now a crisis in Rural General Practice throughout Australia. Rural General Practices, including Sapphire Coast Medical Practice (SCMP), are struggling to attract and maintain sufficient GPs to provide the Primary Care service our community needs. This is despite extensive time, energy and investment in the training of many GP Registrars at SCMP. The fact that only 15% of Australian Medical Graduates plan to, or enter, General Practice compared to 45% of Graduates in the 1980s and 1990s reflects this medical workforce shortage.

The financial viability of private General Practice is also threatened - both from a lack of Doctors, and because of the low Medicare rebates for GP consultations. This is directly due to the Federal Government freeze of the rebate from 2013 to 2018, and the fact the rebate has not kept pace with CPI since the 1990s. Compounding this is the dramatic rise in the costs of running a Medical Practice with more expensive equipment, infrastructure, consumables, and complex Practice accreditation processes. These issues have all been exacerbated by the extra load placed on private General Practice from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To try and remain viable as a private General Practice, and continue to provide quality Primary Care medical services to our community, we need to make changes to our SCMP Billing Policy from the 1st October 2022:

- **Routine bulk-billing will cease for all in-person and telehealth consultations.**
- **Fees will need to be increased to properly reflect the service we strive to provide at SCMP.**
- **Chronic Disease Care items and appropriate Health Assessments will be further utilised to more adequately reflect the level of care we provide at SCMP (these services will be bulk-billed).**
- A review of the level of service we can provide with the medical workforce available to us, to attempt to provide a sustainable Primary Care medical service that will remain available to our community.

We understand the financial implications this will have on patients of our Practice. But these changes are now essential for SCMP to remain a sustainable business while providing the level of care we want to provide you, and which you (should) expect.

Please understand and respect all our staff and Doctors while we implement these changes.