



# The Howard Government's Health Policy:

**If you want to be well  
You better be well off**

Since the Howard Government came to office in 1996 every visit to the local doctor has gradually become more expensive for working families. The rate of Bulk Billing has dropped by 10% and in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas, the situation is significantly worse. On average the cost of seeing a GP has increased from \$8.32 in 1996 to \$13.05 today - an increase of more than 55%. As a result, there is greater pressure on the emergency rooms of our already struggling public hospitals.



**Save Bulk Billing • Protect Medicare**

Printed and authorised by Claire Moore, Labor Senator For Queensland

# The Howard Government's Plan for Medicare

**In the past Australians paid for and benefited from one of the best quality public health systems in the world. Our Medicare cards enabled us to access quality health care when we needed it.**

**From the richest to the poorest, we all pay for this system through taxes. From the richest to the poorest we all benefit from access to this system. The Federal Government is mounting the biggest attack on Medicare and affordable health care since its introduction.**

## Medicare is under attack

- More than 10 million fewer GP visits were bulk billed this year compared to when John Howard came to office – that's 10 million more patients who had to pay upfront to see a doctor
- The average out of pocket cost to see a doctor who does not bulk bill is now \$13.05 – up more than 55% since John Howard came to office in 1996
- **The Government's recent announcement means that Australian families will pay more for their health care.** Now there will be two tiers of Medicare, excluding everyone but pensioners and the poor from bulk billing doctors
- John Howard has refused to give any guarantees that his plan for Medicare will stop the catastrophic decline in bulk billing
- Families earning more than \$32 300 a year will be denied access to bulk billing
- The Australian Medical Association has confirmed that doctors are 'going to have to charge their non-concession card holders more' as a result of the changes
- **Unless you have a concession card you'll need a credit card to pay for your healthcare**





# Labor's New Deal to Save Medicare

A Labor Government will save Medicare with a \$1.9 billion package to reverse the collapse in bulk billing by lifting the patient rebate for bulk billing for **all Australians**, no matter where they live, or how much they earn.

## A Labor Government will:

- Immediately lift the Medicare patient rebate for all bulk billed consultations to 95 percent of the scheduled fee
- Subsequently lift the Medicare patient rebate for all bulk billed consultations to 100 percent of the scheduled fee
- Offer doctors in metropolitan areas an additional \$7 500 each year for bulk billing 80 percent or more of their patients
- Provide for more GPs in the areas that need them and more nurses to assist GPs in their work

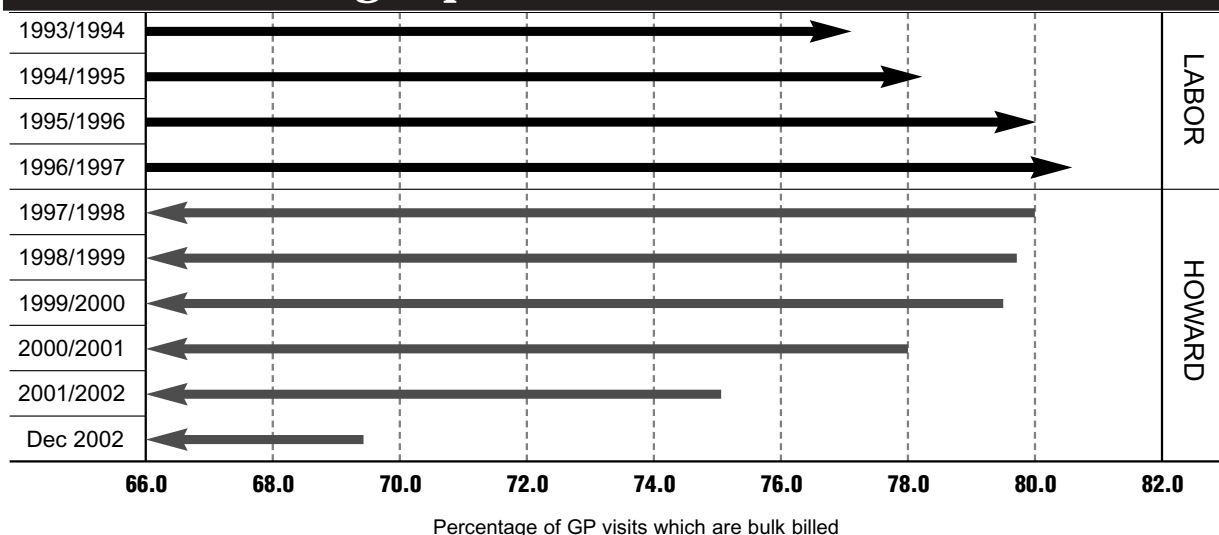
**By offering GPs significant increase in the Medicare rebate and powerful financial incentives to meet bulk billing targets, Labor will restore bulk billing for every Australian, not just concession card holders.**

Under Labor, doctors will be given incentives to boost their bulk billing

- Labor will offer incentives of up to \$22 500 to GPs to keep bulk billing for every Australian
- With Labor's plan a doctor will receive the increased rebate every time he or she chooses to bulk bill a patient
- Because bulk billing is a priority, the rebate for bulk billed consultations should reward GPs who choose to bulk bill

On the other hand the Liberal plan encourages doctors to stop bulk billing ordinary working Australians.

## GP Bulk Billing: Up Under Labor, Down under Howard





**By yourself:**

- Sign the petition in support of Medicare and get other people at work or in your community to do the same
- Contact your local Federal Member of Parliament and express your concerns about this attack on Medicare
- Attend community meetings, rallies, forums and other events organised to protest against the Howard Government's proposed changes to Medicare
- Get involved in the Public Hospitals, Health and Medicare Alliance of Queensland (PHHAMAQ) by contacting Beth Mohle at the QNU on 3840 1444
- Raise the issue at your local church, sporting group or trade union. Discuss your concerns and what can be done to address them with your family, friends and workmates.

it works, it's fair, it's medicare  
**What you can Do**

**With your branch:**

Run a campaign in your local community.

**Some ideas for a campaign might include:**

- ask a speaker to address your branch on the changes to Medicare
- organise a speaker to address other local meetings your branch members are involved in. ie. Parent and Citizen meetings, the Superannuants league
- host a public forum on the Government's changes to Medicare.
- organise a save medicare rally outside your local Liberal or National members office
- coordinate a letter writing campaign to your local newspapers

- hold a street stall in a busy place in your community, hand out flyers and collect petitions

- set up stalls/or hand out flyers at local events/ train stations/bus stops/ Medicare offices

- door-knock/leaflet an area your branch feels would be worst affected by the Governments proposed changes.

- stage a media event outside your local Medicare office

**Some ideas for potential speakers might include:**

- your Labor Federal Member (I am always happy to speak at your branch)
- The Doctors Reform Society

- the Queensland Nurses Union

- the Public Hospitals, Health and Medicare Alliance

- the Pensioners and Superannuants League

**My Office can help:**

- organise speakers
- prepare and copy material
- provide save medicare corflutes for streets stalls and events
- provide more copies of petitions and other material included in this mailout
- target areas of your community that will be worst affected by the Government's proposed changes

