

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Minister for Health
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Fax: (02) 6273 4146; Fax: (02) 9977 8715

Dear Minister

Re: Including Acupuncture under Medicare for Enhanced Primary Care

Australians are entitled to have access to the best available health care under Medicare. This includes access to acupuncture and related treatment provided by qualified acupuncturists under the Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) program.

I am an enrolled student of acupuncture and student member of the Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Ltd (AACMA). I am concerned about my future as a qualified acupuncturist in Australia.

I seek your government's pre-election commitment to include services provided by AACMA-accredited acupuncturists under the Enhanced Primary Care program.

Under Medicare, rebates are permitted under the general tables for acupuncture provided by general medical practitioners. Services provided by allied health providers are covered under the EPC program. However, acupuncture provided by qualified acupuncturists is not included under the EPC program. This results not only in unnecessary limitations for chronically ill Australians in their choice of practitioner, but also generates higher costs under Medicare as patients are apparently directed by government policy to seek acupuncture from a medical practitioner rather than a qualified acupuncturist.

There is sufficient existing evidence and clinical justification to support the inclusion of acupuncture in the EPC program.

AACMA has a credible system in place to identify qualified accredited acupuncturists who are suitable for recognition by the HIC for the delivery of acupuncture services to eligible EPC patients.

It is expected that overall expenditure under the EPC program would not increase as eligible patients would be limited to five Medicare-funded treatments per year (which is their current entitlement) and that significant savings to the health budget are achievable in the immediate and long-term through including acupuncturists in the EPC program.

I understand that a submission by AACMA has already been lodged with you. It may also be downloaded from the AACMA website at www.acupuncture.org.au. I support that submission and believe that a commitment on this matter is possible now and should not be deferred until after the election.

Yours faithfully

Signed _____ Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

