



AACP

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION  
OF CONSULTANT PHYSICIANS

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE FEBRUARY 2007

Greetings and welcome to 2007. I hope you have all had an enjoyable, restful and rewarding holiday season with your families and friends. This year promises to be challenging and hopefully rewarding.

### AACP Submission

As you will have read in previous Updates, or in the RACP news, the AACP Executive has been involved in the preparation of a major submission to the Australian Government seeking new attendance items for consultant physicians and paediatricians. *It is important to point out that this submission is putting the most significant case for new attendance items for many years and, as such, its success will be dependent on recognition in the Federal Budget.*

For those of you who may have been following our progress over the past six months or so, our submission has been progressing through the various levels of scrutiny within the Department of Health and Ageing. This has involved many meetings and discussions with senior Departmental officers to consider and reconsider many aspects of the submission.

In order to remain in consideration for a "place" in the 2007 Budget, we need widespread support from a range of Federal politicians – both MPs and Senators – and this has involved putting our case to many of them. We have had a favourable response from all quarters; the basis for the submission and its importance in regard to the future of both general medicine and the rural consultant physician / paediatrician workforce have been well articulated and understood.

We continue to meet with the Department and to seek wider political support for our submission.

In addition to the strong support of the RACP, we have also secured the support of the AMA, who recognise that the proposed new attendance items are vital to the future of consultant physician and paediatric practice. The Secretary / Treasurer, **Dr John Best**, and I met with the AMA President, **Dr Mukesh Haikerwal**, the Secretary General **Dr Robyn Mason**, and **Mr John O'Dea** on the 9<sup>th</sup> February to discuss a range of matters of mutual interest.

**Renew your membership now.  
Renewal form attached.**

## ***Our Relationship with the Department of Health and Ageing***

As noted above, there have been a number of meetings over the past months with the Department. We have had the opportunity to meet with senior officers on a range of issues. We are pleased that the AACP is now being consulted on various matters under consideration that affect consultant physicians and paediatricians, including consultation on and participation in Medicare Benefits Consultative Committee (MBCC) meetings.

## ***New Submissions***

Our colleagues are active in seeking a variety of new Medicare items relevant to their particular spheres of practice.

In December 2006, John Mathew attended an MBCC meeting on our behalf to discuss a submission from the Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS) for new items for high dependency care patients. A revised submission is to be finalised by ANZICS following that meeting and with input from various groups, including AACP. The intent is for this submission to look at broader access to the proposed items that is based on capacity to deliver the particular service, rather than membership of the Society.

The Australian Chapter of Palliative Medicine (ACPM) has made a submission for sequential case conferences and consultation with family members / carers. This matter remains under consideration.

The Australian and New Zealand Society of Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM) have developed a submission for comprehensive geriatrician assessment and management items that have been modelled on the items available to consultant psychiatrists. These items are also subject to ongoing negotiations.

The AACP believes the underlying principles that are important to all such submissions is that the patient receives the appropriate Medicare benefit and that the level of benefit (and access to a particular item) reflect the capability of the consultant physician or paediatrician providing the service. That is, a particular item may well be “generalisable” across several medical specialty groups.

Discussions are in progress with the Department of Health and Ageing to clarify issues and support a long term process that engages AACP in providing assistance and guidance in future negotiations that will secure access to all such items for appropriately qualified and experienced consultant physicians and paediatricians.

## ***Membership***

While there has been an encouraging and steady influx of members renewing their membership for 2007, may I remind you to forward your completed renewal or application form, if you have not already done so. The AACP is here to represent YOU in negotiations on workforce and remuneration.

**Renew your membership now.  
Renewal form attached.**

We have had a few enquiries about the subscription increase for this year. The main reason is that, at \$99, the subscription was simply not enough to support the wide range of matters on which the AACP is now being requested to become involved, in addition to strongly pursuing the submission for the new attendance items. (I might add that the subscription had not increased for more than 10 years.) We believe the current subscription represents good value considering the importance of the tasks the AACP is undertaking.

**If you haven't yet renewed your membership, I urge you to renew now and support the Executive, Council and your colleagues in pursuing a submission that will affect your future practice.** A membership form is attached for your convenience if required. Contact AACP at [secretariat@aus-physicians.com.au](mailto:secretariat@aus-physicians.com.au) or phone 02 9810 0061.

### ***A New Board Member***

We will be proposing that Dr Richard Whiting, a Melbourne based geriatrician who also provides outreach services to country Victoria, join the ACCP Council at its 1 March 2007 meeting. We look forward to Richard's contribution and his valuable perspective on specialist medical practice in Australia.

### ***March Council Meeting***

The next meeting of the AACP Council will be held on Thursday 1 March 2007 at 6.00 pm at the AACP office, Suite 2, 780 Darling Street, Rozelle. Two major issues under consideration at the meeting will be an amended Memorandum and Articles (*inter alia* to bring the document up to date in terms of current legislative requirements) and a draft AACP Strategic Plan that will lead to a Business Plan.

Regards,  
Les Bolitho  
President

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