

The Closing the Gap - PBS Co-payment Program

The Closing the Gap (CTG) PBS Co-payment Program, implemented on 1 July 2010, was one of 14 measures in the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package (ICDP), and was established to reduce the cost of PBS medicines for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with, or at risk of, chronic disease. The ICDP was the Commonwealth's contribution to the \$1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.

The 2014-15 Budget consolidated Indigenous health programs into the new Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP). The focus of the IAHP is the identification, treatment and management of chronic disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

When obtaining PBS medicines at their local pharmacy, eligible general patients who would normally pay the full PBS co-payment will pay the concessional rate and those eligible patients who would normally pay the concessional rate receive their PBS medicines without being required to pay a PBS co-payment.

Eligibility

The Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program is available to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people of any age who present with an existing chronic disease or are at risk of chronic disease, and in the opinion of the prescriber:

- ① • would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of chronic disease if the person did not take the prescribed medicine; and
- ② • are unlikely to adhere to their medicines regimen without assistance through the program.
- ③ • Eligible patients can be registered at either:
- ④ • general practices participating in the Indigenous Health Incentive under the Practice Incentives Program (PIP); or
- ⑤ • Indigenous Health Services (IHS) in urban and rural settings.

Eligible prescribers need to be a member, employee or contractor of a general practice participating in the Indigenous Health Incentive under the PIP or an Indigenous Health Service in a rural or urban setting. To be eligible to participate in the PIP, practices must meet the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) definition of a 'general practice' and be accredited or registered for accreditation against the RACGP *Standards for general practices*.

To ensure continuity of a patient's care, medical specialists are also eligible to annotate CTG prescriptions for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients under the Program when they are:

- ① • providing services at a non-remote Indigenous Health Service; or
- ② • treating an eligible patient that has been referred by a GP from a PIP Indigenous Health Incentive practice or participating Indigenous Health Service.

The CTG PBS Co-payment Program is available in remote areas through general practices participating in PIP where there is a pharmacy available to dispense the prescription. Complementing this, and recognising that there may not be pharmacies available to dispense in some remote areas, the Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) Program allows clients of approved remote area aboriginal health services (AHS) to receive medicines from the AHS, without the need for a normal PBS prescription form, and without charge. For more information, please visit the Services Australia or the Department of Health.

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Applying for the Closing the Gap – PBS Co-payment Program

For applications, for both providers and eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to sign up for the Program, please visit the [Services Australia](#).

For the Practice Incentives Program Indigenous Health Incentive and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-payment Program Patient Registration and Consent Form (IP017), please visit the [Services Australia](#).

Questions and answers

Who can write CTG annotated prescriptions?

Prescribers in the following primary care settings may annotate PBS prescriptions for eligible patients under the Program:

- General practices that participate in the Indigenous Health Incentive under the Practice Incentives Program; or
- Approved Indigenous Health Services in urban and rural settings.

To ensure continuity of a patient's care, medical specialists are also eligible to annotate CTG prescriptions for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients under the Program when they are:

- providing services at a non-remote Indigenous Health Service; or
- treating an eligible patient that has been referred by a GP from a PIP Indigenous Health Incentive practice or participating Indigenous Health Service.

What PBS medicines are covered by the CTG PBS Co-payment Program?

Prescriptions for an eligible patient's PBS General Schedule medicines are covered under the Program.

Highly Specialised Drugs and other medicines provided under special supply arrangements under Section 100 of the *National Health Act 1953* are excluded from the Program.

Note: Hospital prescriptions are excluded from the Program.

How can I determine whether a patient is eligible?

A patient is eligible if they are an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person of any age who presents with an existing chronic disease or are at risk of chronic disease and in the opinion of the prescriber:

- would experience setbacks in the prevention or ongoing management of chronic disease if the person did not take the prescribed medicine; and
- would be unlikely to adhere to their medicines regimen without assistance through the Program.

Where can I obtain further information?

You can contact the PIP enquiry line on 1800 222 032 for further information on registration and renewal processes.

Note: For more information relating to administrative matters, such as how to sign up or annotate scripts, you should refer to the [Services Australia](#).