

# ESSA FOR AN ACTIVE NATION

## IMPROVING THE MEDICARE BENEFITS SCHEDULE



### AUSTRALIA'S NEED

#### A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO HEALTH CARE FOR AUSTRALIANS THAT:

- Delivers appropriate levels of funding to support the best individual care, when and where they need it.
- Addresses the health gaps in Australia, providing a fair go for those who need it the most.
- Empowers a strong health system that places individuals at the centre of care.



### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

#### CHRONIC DISEASE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF POOR HEALTH AND COSTS THE HEALTH SYSTEM BILLIONS OF DOLLARS EACH YEAR:

- Low levels of physical activity are a major risk factor for ill health.
- Around 50% of Australians are insufficiently active.
- Less than 1% of at-risk Australians are referred for exercise interventions.

#### THE CURRENT MEDICAL BENEFITS SCHEDULE (MBS) DOES NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT ACCESS TO EXERCISE INTERVENTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY PREVENT AND/OR MANAGE CHRONIC DISEASE:

- Eligible Australian residents can access exercise interventions through the Medicare Chronic Disease Management program (CDM).

- Current restrictions within the CDM program are:
  - Australians can only access a maximum of five allied health services per year.
  - Allied health services are only funded for the management of existing chronic conditions, not for preventative care.
  - Telehealth services are not recognised or supported.
- Despite the overwhelming strength of evidence underpinning the effectiveness of accredited exercise physiology interventions for the prevention and management of chronic disease, clinical exercise interventions are still not part of routine care.

# THE COST OF INACTION

PHYSICAL  
INACTIVITY COSTS  
**\$67 BILLION**  
GLOBALLY EACH YEAR



PHYSICAL INACTIVITY CAUSES  
**1.9 MILLION DEATHS**  
EACH YEAR



Physical inactivity cost to the  
Australian economy is  
estimated to be

**\$13.8 BILLION**



## WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

- Prevention is cheaper than management. It's time to expand the MBS patient eligibility criteria to subsidise preventative services for Australians.
- A fair go for those who need it the most. Increasing access to CDM services for disadvantaged people will reduce long-term health costs and help restore quality of life. Specifically:
  - Increase the number of services allocated to accredited exercise physiology.
  - Introduce item numbers to allow Australians access to accredited exercise physiologist services via telehealth.
  - Recognise specialists as primary care providers who can refer to accredited exercise physiologists.

## ABOUT EXERCISE & SPORTS SCIENCE AUSTRALIA

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is the nation's peak body and professional association representing over 6,000 members, including university trained Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEP), Accredited Exercise Scientists (AES) and Accredited Sports Scientists (ASpS). This exercise and sports science workforce successfully plays a pivotal role in addressing the health risks and challenges faced by many Australians.

As a leading voice in exercise, physical activity and sport over the last two decades, ESSA together with our members, strives to implement our vision of achieving member excellence in exercise and sports science that will enrich the health and performance of every Australian.

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