



21 AUG, 2025

Bulk billing to help patients

Port Pirie Recorder, Port Pirie



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NERALIE BAILEY

PORT PIRIE - Senator for South Australia, Karen Grogan, visited the Port Pirie Central Clinic last week to congratulate staff on the clinic’s transition to a fully bulk billed service.

At the visit, on Wednesday, August 13, clinic chief executive and managing director Kristy Williamson said families in regional communities were under significant financial pressure, and the change to bulk billing would help to make a difference.

“Too often, people in regional and remote areas face poorer health outcomes due to limited access and affordability,” Ms Williamson said.

“We are in this business because we care and because we want to see healthier Australians.”

Ms Williamson said the clinic was proud to be working alongside the doctors to deliver crucial primary healthcare to the Port Pirie community.

“From September 1, Central Clinic will be fully bulk billed, ensuring affordable access for all.

“With seven doctors operating from the clinic, it truly is the front door to health and wellbeing for many of the 17,000 residents in the region.”

“We have brought this initiative forward to support Port Pirie and the many patients currently facing cost-of-living pressures.

“Located 230 kilometres from Adelaide, our community deserves equitable access to healthcare and bulk billing is an important step in making that a reality.”

“Medical First Group operates 14 clinics, predominantly in regional areas, and by November 1, many of these will move to full bulk billing.”

The Federal Government’s \$8.5 billion investment will deliver an additional 18 million bulk-billed GP visits each year nationwide, as well as hundreds of nursing scholarships and thousands more doctors in the largest GP training program in Australia’s history.

When the new incentive increased payment begins in November, Medicare payments at regional bulk billing practices such as the Central Clinic in Port Pirie will be double what they are now.

In November 2023, the Federal Govern-

ment tripled the bulk-billing incentive for pensioners, concession card holders and children.

Since then, nine out of 10 GP visits for that cohort of eligible patients have been bulk billed.

Central Clinic practice manager Linda Oliphant said the staff and team of five full time doctors were ready for an influx of patients.

“We know that people are struggling,” she said.

“I don’t want anybody to feel that they can’t go to the doctor because they don’t have the money to pay.

“We know that people can go to the hospital but if they are unwell they don’t need to be sitting there for hours.

“Come in at your appointment time and go home; if we can help the hospital as well, that’s good for the community.”

The additional \$8.5 billion investment will mean nine out of 10 GP visits will be bulk billed by 2030, boosting the number of fully bulk billed practices to around 4,800 nationally which is triple the current number.

Senator Grogan said that with the investment into GP bulk billing, the government was ensuring that people only need a Medicare card, not a credit card to access high-quality healthcare.

“This move to a fully bulk billing clinic will help ease the cost of living pressures and ensure people in our regional communities get the care they need when they need it,” Senator Grogan said.

“This is a real win for Port Pirie as we work to support healthy, well connected and productive regional centres.”

Senator Grogan said that in the years she has been visiting the regions, health care was one of the hardest challenges to solve.

“(We need) that consistent support for families and particularly post COVID when we’ve seen such a significant increase in the cost of living, the last thing you want is people making that choice to go or not go to the doctor.

“That’s unconscionable.

“Doing this, increasing bulk billing is for us one of the most important things we can do to make sure that people don’t have to think about it.

“They need a doctor, they just go.”

She said the government was delighted that



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this year would see the biggest group of GP trainees ever to feed into the system to eventually serve the community.

“We need these doctors now but it takes seven years to train a GP,” Ms Grogan said.

“We can’t just say the answer is overseas doctors; having them is great and they bring diversity to the community and they are excellent but we also need to qualify more doctors.”

Medical First Group was founded in September 2019 by Kevin Dhillon and Alok Anand, beginning with the acquisition of the Narre Warren Medical Centre and now employs over 90 GPs and more than 120 nurses and support staff.



Senator Karen Grogan with Dr Daryoush Solgi and Central Clinic Practice Manager Linda Oliphant on site for the announcement of the introduction of a full bulk billing service for Port Pirie (Neralie Bailey: 496140)