



## IAHA RELEASE

### IAHA call for the long-term retention of temporary MBS telehealth items

Available for Immediate Release

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Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA), the peak organisation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health workforce, calls on the government to extend access to Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) telehealth items for allied health professionals.

Introduced in March 2020 in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the ability of people to access in person care, 36 new telehealth allied health items were included on the MBS, replicating existing MBS allied health items traditionally provided face-to-face. Scheduled to expire at the end of September 2020, IAHA joins calls from other stakeholders for the longer-term retention of these telehealth items on the MBS.

IAHA Chairperson, Nicole Turner, said:

*“Recent calls for the extension of MBS telehealth items, including the recommendation of the Select Committee on Financial Technology and Regulatory Technology, have focussed predominately on the medical profession. It is essential that allied health is a focus of these discussions and that people have access to the breadth of essential allied health care needed to support their health and social and emotional wellbeing, including via telehealth”.*

While telehealth solutions are not a replacement for in person, face-to-face care, it does provide an important adjunct to the current health system, particularly where existing failures impact on the ability of people to access care which meets their needs.

Telehealth provides an important opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those in rural and remote and other underserved locations, to access care which would otherwise be unavailable to them or not provided in a way which meets their needs. Telehealth also supports consumer choice, and helps enable individuals to access culturally safe service providers, who may or may not practice in their local region and can work together with them to achieve improved social, emotional, physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Nicole Turner continued:

*“We need to provide people with access to the best quality care while we work to transform systems to better meet the needs of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This includes long term investment in local workforce development and Aboriginal community controlled services and designing allied health service models which are innovative, viable, and reinforcing.*



IAHA call for the extension of the allied health telehealth MBS items to be prioritised, and announced in the immediate future, in order to provide surety to our allied health workforce and continuity of care for people accessing essential allied health services via telehealth.

**END MESSAGE**

**Enquiries:**

Charlie Giles

P: (02) 6285 1010

E: [charlie@iaha.com.au](mailto:charlie@iaha.com.au)