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EMBARGOED TO 1AM, THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2015

Areas where people are most likely to see a GP revealed

People living in metropolitan and regional communities see a GP over one and a half times more often than others in Australia, a new National Health Performance Authority web update reveals today.

The first national figures for the recently established 31 Primary Health Network (PHN) areas that cover Australia show differences in how frequently people visit GPs and specialists, and the average costs per person Medicare paid for these visits.

The data reveal that in 2013–14, across PHN areas:

- Across metropolitan and regional communities people living in the Australian Capital
 Territory PHN area saw a GP on average 4.5 times in 2013–14, compared to people
 living in South Western Sydney who saw a GP on average 7.6 times. In some more rural
 areas, such as the Northern Territory and Country WA, people saw a GP less often 3.6
 and 4.1 times per person respectively
- Across PHN areas people living in Murrumbidgee saw a GP after hours least often, compared to people living in Western Sydney who saw a GP after hours most often. The average amount spent by Medicare on after-hours GP visits ranged from \$5 per capita in Murrumbidgee to \$49 per capita in the Gold Coast
- Across metropolitan and regional communities the average amount spent by Medicare on GP visits ranged from \$203 per capita in the Australian Capital Territory PHN area to \$339 per capita in South Western Sydney. The average amount spent by Medicare on specialist visits ranged from \$43 per capita in Northern Queensland to \$114 per capita in Northern Sydney.

The new information appears as an update to the Performance Authority's MyHealthyCommunities website, and includes new information for visits, expenditures and bulk-billing rates in 2013–14 for more than 300 local areas.

The results in today's web update were similar even when the data were age-standardised – indicating that differences in age profile across communities did not materially impact results.

Each community has its own unique health and socioeconomic profile that could explain some of the differences in use of medical care, as local areas with poor health may need more care. Patients in some local areas may also receive more care than others from health professionals other than Medicare-funded doctors.

"PHNs can use this new information to better understand their community's use of medical care, in addition to seeing how they compare with other areas across Australia," National Health Performance Authority CEO Dr Diane Watson said.

In addition to the PHN area data released today, a breakdown for more than 300 smaller areas that cover the whole of Australia, known as Statistical Areas Level 3 (SA3s), has also been released on the MyHealthyCommunities website, providing the most granular information on these measures to date.

The Performance Authority's MyReport tool allows users to build custom reports for more than 140 measures of health and care in local communities, including those measures released today, to help health professionals interpret this new information locally and use it to improve services.

Note to media

The <u>web update</u> shows data for the following 2013–14 Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) activities:

- GP attendances (including age-standardised)
- Expenditure on GP attendances (including age-standardised)
- Specialist attendances (including age-standardised)
- Expenditure on specialist attendances (including age-standardised)
- After hours GP attendances (including age-standardised)
- Expenditure on after-hours GP attendances (including age-standardised)
- Bulk-billed GP attendances.

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