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## **Medicare Rebate: Cost and Access**

Access and equity are generally measured through aspects such as cost, appropriateness, eligibility criteria, location, timeliness and quality of services. Timeliness is of particular importance with regards to abortion due to greater safety of the procedure when done in early pregnancy<sup>1</sup>. Cost is also an important access consideration with abortion as out-of-pocket expenses tend to be high.

The approximate out-of-pocket cost of a first trimester abortion is around \$220 in metropolitan areas and up to \$480 for regional areas. For women with no Medicare Card the out of pocket expense is often over \$600 as costs must be covered for the procedure as well as anaesthetic and theatre fees<sup>2</sup>. Women in regional areas generally have to cover costs of travel and accommodation as well. Unlike other medical procedures there is no government assistance for this, usually because terminations are provided by general practitioners rather than specialists on referral<sup>3</sup>.

The majority of abortion services are performed in private clinics in which women can generally access the service quickly. Many of these clinics offer discounted costs for women with no means to pay. However for those, such as rural women, who can not access private clinics or those with no means to cover out-of-pocket expenses they are reliant on the public system where there may be waiting lists.

### **(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council 1998 Termination of Pregnancy in Australia: A Review of Health Care Services, unpublished

<sup>2</sup> Association for the Legal Right to Abortion <http://www.alra.iinet.net.au/clinics.html> and Dixon, Nicolee 2003 Abortion Law Reform: An Overview of Current Issues *Queensland Parliamentary Library, Brisbane* <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/parlib/publications/publications.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Dixon, Nicolee 2003 Abortion Law Reform: An Overview of Current Issues *Queensland Parliamentary Library, Brisbane* <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/parlib/publications/publications.htm>

*The Australian Reproductive Health Alliance (ARHA) is an advocacy agency that seeks to advance the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994). ARHA promotes public support for reproductive rights and gender equity.*

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