

Full responses from Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten

Written by Lucinda Beaman, Deputy Editor, FactCheck, The Conversation

In relation to [this FactCheck](#) on Australia's bulk-billing rates, The Conversation requested sources and comment from Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Labor leader Bill Shorten to support their conflicting statements about bulk-billing rates.

Full response from Bill Shorten's office

In response to the request, a spokesperson for Bill Shorten pointed The Conversation to [Medicare statistics for the 2016 September quarter](#)

The spokesperson added:

The Government's figures show that from June to September 2016 the bulk-billing rate for non-referred attendances fell from 84.6% to 84.1%.

Through an information request through the Parliamentary Budget Office, we know that for item 23(a) – a standard GP consultation – we also know the bulk-billing rate is falling: from 82.81% in April 2016 to 82.38% in May 2016 to 81.97% in June 2016. This trend continues as is reflected in the rate falling for all non-referred attendances from June to September.

There has also been [reports](#) of many doctors changing their bulk-billing practices after 1 July "when they knew the Turnbull government had been re-elected and the freeze would continue". This freeze is in place until July 2020.

Full response from Malcolm Turnbull's office

Questions from The Conversation in bold:

Could you please provide a source (or sources) to support the assertion that bulk-billing rates are at record levels?

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The headline bulk-billing rate of 85.1% for GP services is the official bulk-billing figure for 2015-16.

This is the highest bulk-billing rate for GP services since 1984-85 (when Medicare started) – ie: record levels.

The headline bulk-billing rate of 78.2% for all Medicare services is the official bulk-billing figure for 2015-16. This is the highest bulk-billing rate for Total Medicare services since 1984-85 (when Medicare started) ie: again, record levels.

Source: [Annual Medicare Statistics: 2015-16](#) (latest available) Table 1.4a.

Was the prime minister referring to any specific type of bulk-billing, for example GP bulk-billing? Or overall bulk-billing rates?

Both the GP bulk-billing rate and the bulk-billing rate for all Medicare services are at record levels.

Is there any other comment you'd like us to include?

No, except to note that the bulk-billing rate has been reported on a consistent basis under all governments since 1984-85.

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Read more <http://theconversation.com/full-responses-from-malcolm-turnbull-and-bill-shorten-7>

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