

From: [REDACTED]
To: [medboardconsultation](#)
Subject: Consultation: revised telehealth guidelines
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Attachments: [REDACTED]

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Hello

I was encouraged to make this direct submission following completing an online survey regarding telehealth and proposed new recommendations.

I live in a reasonably large country town of [REDACTED] people also servicing a much wider area of smaller towns and farms. We have a Base Hospital and numerous medical clinics offering GP appointments. However, it is extremely difficult to get an appointment with **any** doctor in town, often needing to wait 4 months or longer for an appointment with my regular doctor. I am a Type 1 diabetic, and my husband is Type 2 and has additional mental health issues. Should I need a prescription urgently, my only option is to begin on the dot of 8.00am in the morning and begin ringing my regular doctor's surgery. I can make upwards of 100 phone calls in the morning, trying to just get a connection with the surgery. Often, when I finally get through it is to find that there are no more appointments available for that day. Services providing online prescriptions are invaluable in these circumstances when urgent medication, the lack of which is life-threatening, is required.

The situation regarding doctors and the lack thereof in country areas has been widely reported in the media, but unless you have experienced the frustration of trying and failing to get an urgent doctor's appointment repeatedly it is impossible to fully realise the situation. The whole issue of GPs in country towns is heavily politicised, and completely fails to service the communities they are supposed to care for. There are numbers of doctors at each practice, however most of them are migrants, challenged speaking English and therefore extremely difficult to communicate with. I have tried numerous times to build up a relationship with one or the other of them, only to find that just as they are beginning to understand my needs and treat me suitably they move on to 'greener pastures' in city areas. This is frustrating and disappointing to say the least.

In these circumstances an online consulting service comes to the rescue, providing much-needed scripts and referrals to specialists.

Regarding the latter, this brings up another issue. I find there is a reluctance with doctors in rural areas to send patients to specialists – whether because they want to keep the work in town, or think they know better I am at a loss to understand. Although I pleaded for a referral for my daughter's back pain I was finally forced to find a doctor through an online service. The result was my daughter needed urgent surgery and has been left with debilitating disabilities and chronic pain which could have been avoided had she been referred out of town earlier.

I am thankful I do not have small children, as many of my friends have resorted to presenting at

the hospital emergency department to get treatment for ailments such as tonsilitis and ear infections.

The doctors who are locals and have been practising in the area for a long time are mostly also the proprietors of the local GP clinics and as such they wield a huge amount of influence over the Health Area executives. Most of them have stopped providing bulk billing to **any** patients, which would be fine if you could see a doctor and get treatment for your condition. Recently I was told by a doctor to google my condition and get exercises from YouTube, and then charged \$80.00 for the consultation. Episodes such as these are just making a mockery of the whole medical system in this country which has the potential to be one of the greatest in the world if we could just leave the politics and money grabbing out of it and 'first – do no harm'.

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]