



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cataract patients winners in rebate compromise

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AUSTRALIANS requiring cataract surgery will benefit from a compromise reached between the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) and the Australian Government.

ASO president Dr Brad Horsburgh said the government's agreement to reduce the Medicare rebate for cataract surgery by only 12 per cent, rather than the originally announced 51 per cent, was a great outcome for patients.

"A reduction of 12 per cent compared with the government's original proposal of 51 per cent will offer significant financial relief to patients, not to mention improved health outcomes," Dr Horsburgh said.

"The ASO has always argued that the interests of patients should be the primary consideration in negotiations over the amount of the Medicare rebate for cataract surgery.

"This compromise will give considerable comfort to those Australians requiring cataract surgery who had been concerned that the original proposal would have added a cost burden many could simply not afford."

Dr Horsburgh said although the exact details were yet to be released by Health Minister Roxon's office, the new arrangements would benefit a wide spectrum of cataract sufferers.

"Minister Roxon has also agreed to a \$5 million outreach fund for rural and indigenous communities.

"This aspect of the agreement will offer considerable relief to a significantly disadvantaged section of the Australian community where cataract treatment is a real issue.

"The agreement reached between the ASO and the Australian Government is a far better outcome for patients and demonstrates the commitment of ophthalmologists to their patients and to better eye care.

"The ASO commends the government and Minister Roxon for their cooperation in concluding a deal which will bring tangible health benefits to thousands of Australians."

Media contacts: Dr Brad Horsburgh Ph: 0417 790 313 Dr Bill Glasson 0427 757 375

All correspondence: PO Box 1300 Spring Hill Qld 4004

President: Dr Brad Horsburgh Ph: 07 3831 3004 / Fax: 07 3831 4005

Secretary / Treasurer: Dr John Kennedy Ph: 02 8382 6030 / Fax: 02 8382 6031