

## ICON GROUP

Radiation Therapy is a critical form of cancer treatment that needs to be maintained from an access and quality perspective across Australia. The ROHPG was introduced in consideration of these two important factors which has made it feasible for providers in both the public and private sectors to replace old equipment with up to date new technology.

From a private provider standpoint, implementing a new service in a region that has been identified with a need for radiotherapy becomes unviable due to the high operational costs and the cost associated with new equipment without a ROHPG. Additionally, the linking of ROHPG to specific sites has prevented unnecessary duplication of services.

ROHPGs have provided the means to increase access to radiotherapy to patients requiring the service throughout Australia and importantly in regional areas where access was once a problem. Patients in regional areas were required to travel large distances to metropolitan service providers to access care which impacted patients from both a travel and cost perspective. In addition, patients would be away from their carers for extended periods which added to the overall inequity of not being able to access care in their local region. Across Australia we have seen a vast improvement in regional access to radiotherapy and this can be attributed to the success of the ROHPG. It is important that this is acknowledged and maintained, as growing regional populations will inevitably result in an increase in the number of linear accelerators required to meet this demand.

The standard of modern day radiotherapy is linked to improved outcomes for patients. This is a result of the combination of high end equipment that facilitates cutting edge treatment techniques. One cannot occur without the other. Therefore, to maintain the highest standard of quality and to continue to improve patient outcomes, radiotherapy service providers need to have the ability to not only purchase expensive technologically advanced equipment, but also require the capacity to refresh equipment. Technological advancements have been occurring at a fast pace in the radiotherapy sphere and staying current is essential. ROHPG facilitates this and is absolutely vital for the future maintenance of quality radiotherapy services in Australia. Dated equipment does not offer the capability to provide a service that is in line with today's standard. In addition, new equipment is not only expensive but the price to acquire is increasing. International exchange rates are also exacerbating this issue and this is unlikely to abate moving forward.

We believe the ROHPG program can be further enhanced and tailored to suit modern radiotherapy service requirements by:

- Updating the list of approved equipment by removing those that are outdated (ie linear accelerators without On-board Imaging (OBI))
- Updating the list of approved equipment by considering the cost of new equipment
- Implementing a process to maintain this list on an ongoing basis by conducting regular reviews
- Consider the requirement of ancillary equipment which is required to provide a standard of care that accounts for active respiratory control in both simulation and treatment (currently at a cost which is in line with a treatment planning system)
- Provide ROHPG for equipment that delivers stereotactic treatment. This would increase viability of this vital technology as the present MBS schedule for this service does not reflect the cost of establishing this service.

We thank the Department of Health for the opportunity to submit our viewpoint on the ROHPG program and we would like to reiterate the importance of this program to the ever increasing demand of quality radiotherapy services in Australia. The program has been very successful and is testament to the improved patient outcomes directly resulting from equipment that facilitates advanced treatment techniques.