



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the
Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit report:
Report 505: Inquiry into Policy and Program Design and
Implementation

SEPTEMBER 2025

Recommendations

The Government thanks the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit for its work in preparing the report and for its detailed consideration of the issues raised. The Government acknowledges the Committee's findings and appreciates the contributions made by stakeholders throughout the inquiry process. This Government response addresses the two policy recommendations outlined in the Committee's report, specifically Recommendation 5 and Recommendation 8. The remaining recommendations, which are administrative in nature, will be considered and responded to by the relevant departments.

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government prioritise any necessary legislative changes in order to address the current structure of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* to align with the modern technological requirements of telehealth.

Response: The Australian Government **agrees in principle** to this recommendation.

The Australian Government is advancing several updates to the [Health Insurance Act 1973](#) (Act) and subordinate regulations in its stewardship of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). For example, the [Health Insurance Legislation Amendment \(Assignment of Medicare Benefits\) Act 2024](#), assented to on 9 July 2024, will modernise the process of bulk billing across the range of MBS services, informed by findings of the Australian National Audit Office in its 2023 report [Expansion of Telehealth Services](#). Relevant amendments to regulations are a current priority of the Government, to support changes to assignment of Medicare benefits which will take effect from January 2026.

The structure of the Act and subordinate regulations are considered to promote MBS telehealth care of a high standard, enabling patients to access safe and equitable services. The Government continues to consider changes to MBS telehealth items that have been recommended by the independent clinician-led [MBS Review Advisory Committee](#) (MRAC), ensuring that the MBS supports healthcare providers to adopt contemporary evidence-based practice. Several MRAC recommendations have already been implemented via amendments to the [Health Insurance \(Section 3C General Medical Services – Telehealth and Telephone Attendances\) Determination 2021](#).

While MBS regulations specify whether MBS services should be provided in-person, by phone or by videoconference, they do not provide detailed technology specifications. Healthcare providers are private businesses and are responsible for their choice of technology solutions which must be compliant with relevant national, state or territory privacy and security laws.

Recommendation 8: The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider further reforms to make the partner and child family visa programs truly demand driven with reasonable waiting times, excising these streams from the annual headline permanent migration cap and allocating sufficient processing resources annually to meet projected demand with a reasonable average processing time.

Response: The Australian Government **notes** this recommendation.

The permanent Migration Program (Migration Program) planning level is set based on Government priorities. The Government considers a range of factors when determining the

size and composition of the Migration Program. These factors include Australia's strategic, economic and social priorities, community needs, demand for visas and impacts of planning levels on visa processing times.

The Child and Partner programs are managed under the Family Stream of the Migration Program. Both the Child and Partner programs are demand driven. The planning levels for these programs are nominal and are not subject to a legislative cap.

All visa programs, regardless of whether there is a planning level in place, are subject to limited resourcing which can result in delays in application assessment, especially in periods of increased demand. Processing times are published on the Department of Home Affairs' website.