

RADIATION ONCOLOGY FACT SHEET

Radiotherapy is one of the main treatment modalities in cancer management, often used in combination with other treatments such as surgery or chemotherapy. Approximately 40% of cancer cures are attributed to radiotherapy¹. There is evidence from an overview of the published literature that around 48.3% of patients with cancer would benefit from radiotherapy at some stage during the course of their illness².

Over the years there has been a deliberate increase by the Australian Government in radiotherapy investment. Australian Government funding for radiation oncology is provided through a range of funding measures including Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) funding for medical services, the Radiation Oncology Health Program Grants (ROHPG) Scheme funding for high-cost equipment and one-off funding grants for the construction of new and improved radiotherapy facilities.

In 2014-15 the Australian Government provided approximately:

- \$68 million in capital reimbursement funding under the ROHPG Scheme³; and
- \$342 million in funding through the MBS for around 1.9 million radiotherapy services⁴.

A report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Radiation Therapy Waiting Times](#) was released in November 2015, revealing that most patients who receive radiotherapy wait less than two weeks for treatment and that almost all emergency cases begin their treatment on the same or next day.

ROHPG Scheme

The ROHPG Scheme was introduced in 1988 under Part IV of the Health Insurance Act 1973 as an alternative method for funding the capital cost of expensive radiotherapy equipment, which was formerly funded through Medicare arrangements.

Payments are in addition to Medicare rebates that patients receive for radiotherapy services. The Scheme is open to public and private providers who are recognised as an ‘approved health service’ (at a specific location) under the Act. More information about the Scheme can be found [here](#).

National allocation of radiation therapy equipment (private and public)⁵ is outlined below:

State	% of Australian population	% of linacs ⁶	% of facilities	No. of linacs	No. of facilities
NSW	32%	30%	34%	60	26
Vic	25%	23%	24%	45	18
Qld	20%	23%	21%	46	16
SA	11%	8%	8%	15	6
WA	7%	10%	8%	20	6
Tas	2%	3%	3%	5	2
ACT	2%	2%	1%	4	1
NT	1%	1%	1%	2	1
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	197	76

¹ Tripartite National Strategic Plan for Radiation Oncology 2012-22.

² Review of Optimal Radiotherapy Utilisation Rates, Barton et al. 2013.

³ Sourced from the Department of Health financial management system.

⁴ Sourced from the Department of Health Medicare (MBS) Statistics (unpublished data).

⁵ Compiled by the Australian Clinical Dosimetry Service as at March 2015 and updated by the Department in January 2016.

⁶ Linacs, or linear accelerators, are the main treatments machines used to deliver radiation treatment.

The Scheme has not been formally reviewed since 1999 but has been subject to investigation as part of the broader [2002 Baume Inquiry](#) into radiotherapy services and an audit of the Scheme conducted by the Australian National Audit Office, due to be tabled in Parliament in 2016.