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## **Natural medicine's largest Association responds to the announcement about Health Fund Rebate cuts**

The Australian Traditional-Medicine Society (ATMS), Australia's largest national association representing professional practitioners of natural medicine, responds to the Sydney Morning Herald article: [Health fund premiums to be reined in under sweeping Turnbull government changes](#), discussing potential changes to rebates for natural medicine.

This announcement comes after a recent Review of the Australian Government Rebate by the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer on Private Health Insurance for Natural Therapies.

The debate on health insurance rebates is two-fold with Australians free to choose natural medicine treatments and health funds free to provide rebates for services. The proposal is not clear on the impact to private health funds with extras cover.

Currently there has been no formal statement from the Australian Health Funds on whether they have plans to remove rebates on private health insurance cover for natural therapies, including aromatherapy, Bowen therapy, Buteyko, Feldenkrais, herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, kinesiology, naturopathy, Pilates, reflexology, Rolfing, shiatsu, tai chi and yoga.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Wurf, Chief Executive Officer, ATMS, says in the public's best interests, natural medicine treatments should be considered as part of a holistic national health policy, rather than a budget cut.

"Figures demonstrate that interest in natural medicine is growing both here in Australia and around the world, with 2 out of 3 Australians having used complementary and natural medicines.<sup>2</sup> The proposal disregards the voice of these consumers in how they choose to manage their health and wellbeing," says Mr Wurf.

Due to its focus on preventive medicine, another benefit of natural medicine is that in the long-term individuals may save money on hospital and medical costs.<sup>3 4 5 6</sup>

ATMS strongly believe it is a false economy to cut this critical choice of health services to everyday Australians. Rather than opting for more expensive medical procedures up front, planned wellness strategies, including changes to diet and lifestyle, can potentially save individuals and the healthcare system on hospital and medical costs in the long run.

"Furthermore, natural medicine practitioners are a valuable contributor to the economy, making up more than 25,000 small businesses across Australia and providing an annual contribution to the economy of \$4.2bn<sup>2</sup> – that's a figure that can't be ignored," says Mr Wurf.

ATMS is working to clarify the proposal from the Government, and working closely with health funds to ensure that these cuts to rebates don't affect practitioners and consumers of natural medicine.



ATMS reiterates its concern that the proposed cuts to health insurance products for natural therapies are not in the best interest of the public's health and wellbeing and will not yield long term cost saving. This policy also does not take into consideration the current positive economic impact of this industry – both in alleviating the conventional healthcare burden and regarding the significant economic contribution of 25,000 small businesses.

For more information on natural medicine, please visit: [www.atms.com.au](http://www.atms.com.au).

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Interviews with Charles Wurf, CEO of ATMS and are available on request.

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**Notes to editors:**

**About the Australian Traditional-Medicine Society:**

The Australian Traditional-Medicine Society (ATMS) is the leader of the natural medicine industry, promoting and representing professional practitioners of natural medicine, who are encouraged to pursue the highest ideals of professionalism in their natural medicine practice and education. As Australia's largest national professional association for natural medicine practitioners, ATMS is a multi-disciplinary association representing approximately 11,000 accredited practitioners throughout Australia. ATMS was founded in 1984 and is an incorporated not-for-profit company. In 2014 ATMS celebrated their 30th anniversary representing natural medicine practitioners in Australia. ATMS is governed by a Board of Directors with specialised departments for Massage Therapy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Homeopathy, Nutrition, Naturopathy and Herbal Medicine.

Connect with ATMS on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

<http://atms.com.au>

**References:**

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