



Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons welcomes Federal Government's budget announcement: new MBS item number for abdominoplasty

Sydney. March 31, 2022: This week's announcement in the Federal Government's 2022 Budget Papers that an allocation has been made for a new MBS item number for abdominoplasty (surgical repair of rectus diastasis for separation of the large abdominal muscles following pregnancy), has been met with full support and approval of Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS). The changes are scheduled for 1 July 2022.

The announcement comes after a prolonged period of submissions to Government by the ASPS and the MSAC (Medical Services Advisory Committee) recommending that a new MBS item number be created and reinstated.

Dr Dan Kennedy, President, ASPS said his members are delighted with the Government's announcement and it is wonderful news for all Australian women who have suffered with symptoms such as chronic back pain following pregnancy, resulting in a severely compromised quality of life.

"We are pleased the Government has listened to the specialist plastic surgeon community and Australian women and have made an informed and moral decision which will help 1000s of women in the community who suffer each year from this chronic condition," said Dr Kennedy. "This will make an enormous difference to so many women who previously could not consider the surgery due to financial constraints."

Abdominoplasty surgery involves sewing back together abdominal muscles that have been separated during pregnancy (diastasis recti). This surgery was removed from the MBS in 2016 due to concerns it was being misused for cosmetic purposes rather than medically-necessary reasons. Cosmetic surgeries are not covered by Medicare.

This decision impacted thousands of post-partum Australian women suffering chronic back pain, and in some cases, incontinence that failed to resolve with conservative treatment such as physiotherapy or Pilates. Without a Medicare item number, private health insurance would not cover costs associated with the abdominal repair leaving many women unable to have the surgery or facing costs of more than \$15,000 for the procedure.

"Because this procedure has been commonly described as a 'tummy tuck' many people in the past assumed that it is always purely a cosmetic procedure and found it difficult to believe it might be for a legitimate functional reason," said Dr Kennedy.

"However, for those women who need it, this is medically-necessary reconstructive surgery that restores functionality to women, and allows them to resume normal physical activities as simple as picking up their children without pain. With the reinstatement of a new MBS number many Australian women can now have access to this important plastic surgery and improve their quality of life."



Mother of twins, Kerrie Edwards who initiated a petition that was signed by 13,000 people and tabled in the House of Representatives by Dr. Fiona Martin MP, on behalf of many thousands of mothers, said she was also delighted with this week's budget announcement.

"I am delighted the Federal Government has heard the voices of so many women who have been suffering from this debilitating condition," said Edwards. "We now have the opportunity to move forward with our lives and consider a surgical procedure which will allow us to lift our children without pain; participate in sport or exercise, and return to the workforce without fear of embarrassment or taking sick leave." she concluded.

"Women should ensure they should speak to their doctor about non-surgical options," said Dr Kennedy, "as surgeons will need to demonstrate the patient's procedure is medically-necessary and that non-surgical options have been tried first. Meeting these criteria will be necessary to be eligible

To access ASPS' Frequently Asked Questions about abdominoplasty please visit [ASPS dedicated webpage](#)

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