



1800MEDICARE	
Party:	Australian Labor Party
Summary of proposal: The proposal would establish a free urgent GP telehealth service available nationwide and 24/7 from 1 January 2026. This would involve improving and expanding the existing Healthdirect services to all states and territories. The proposal would be ongoing and start on 1 July 2025.	
Additional information (based on further advice provided): Departmental costs would be met from within existing resources.	

Costing overview

The proposal would be expected to increase the fiscal and underlying cash balances by around \$209 million over the 2025-26 Budget forward estimates period (see Table 1). This impact reflects an increase in administered expenses.

The proposal would be expected to have an impact beyond the 2025-26 Budget forward estimates period. A breakdown of the financial implications (including separate public debt interest (PDI) tables) over the period to 2035-36 is provided at Attachment A.

Table 1: 1800MEDICARE – Financial implications (\$m)^{(a)(b)}

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total to 2028-29
Fiscal balance	-60.8	-55.6	-45.8	-46.5	-208.7
Underlying cash balance	-60.8	-55.6	-45.8	-46.5	-208.7

(a) A positive number represents an increase in the relevant budget balance; a negative number represents a decrease.

(b) PDI impacts are not included in the totals.

Key assumptions and methodology

The financial implications of the proposal were estimated based on data and models provided by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Administered expenses capture the costs of expanding helpline services to all states and territories by multiplying projected call volumes by an average rate per call. Additional costs are incurred to integrate digital infrastructure, rebrand and promote the existing Healthdirect service into 1800Medicare.

Departmental costs are associated with a team to manage and implement the changes. These costs are estimated using the Parliamentary Budget Office's (PBO) departmental calculator based on an

assumed average staffing level (ASL) profile provided by the Department of Health and Aged Care. As specified in the proposal, departmental impacts would be met from within existing resources.

Financial implications were rounded consistent with the PBO's rounding rules.¹

Data sources

Commonwealth of Australia (2025) *Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2025*, Commonwealth of Australia.

The Department of Health and Aged Care provided data and modelling relating to this commitment.

¹ <https://www.pbo.gov.au/for-parliamentarians/how-we-analyse/pbo-rounding-rules>

Attachment A – 1800MEDICARE – Financial implications

Table A1: 1800MEDICARE – Fiscal and underlying cash balances (\$m)^(a)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36	Total to 2028-29	Total to 2035-36
Expenses													
Administered													
<i>Expanded and enhanced services</i>	-60.8	-55.6	-45.8	-46.5	-48.8	-51.1	-53.5	-56.0	-58.7	-61.5	-64.5	-208.7	-602.8
Departmental													
<i>Additional ASL</i>	-3.7	-2.8	-2.4	-2.4	-2.5	-2.5	-2.5	-2.6	-2.6	-2.6	-2.7	-11.3	-29.3
<i>Reprioritisation of additional ASL</i>	3.7	2.8	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	11.3	29.3
Total – expenses	-60.8	-55.6	-45.8	-46.5	-48.8	-51.1	-53.5	-56.0	-58.7	-61.5	-64.5	-208.7	-602.8
Total (excluding PDI)	-60.8	-55.6	-45.8	-46.5	-48.8	-51.1	-53.5	-56.0	-58.7	-61.5	-64.5	-208.7	-602.8

(a) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.

Table A2: 1800MEDICARE – Memorandum item: Public Debt Interest (PDI) impacts – Fiscal and underlying cash balances (\$m)^{(a)(b)}

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36	Total to 2028-29	Total to 2035-36
Fiscal balance	-1.3	-4.0	-6.4	-8.7	-11.2	-14.0	-16.9	-20.2	-23.7	-27.5	-31.7	-20.4	-165.6
Underlying cash balance	-1.0	-3.3	-5.8	-8.1	-10.6	-13.3	-16.2	-19.4	-22.8	-26.5	-30.6	-18.2	-157.6

- (a) As this table is presented as a memorandum item, these figures are not reflected in the totals above. This is consistent with the approach taken in the budget where the budget impact of most measures is presented excluding the impact on PDI. If the reader would like a complete picture of the total aggregate, then these figures would need to be added to the figures above. For further information on government borrowing and financing please refer to the PBO's online budget glossary².
- (b) A positive number for the fiscal balance indicates an increase in revenue or a decrease in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A negative number for the fiscal balance indicates a decrease in revenue or an increase in expenses or net capital investment in accrual terms. A positive number for the underlying cash balance indicates an increase in receipts or a decrease in payments or net capital investment in cash terms. A negative number for the underlying cash balance indicates a decrease in receipts or an increase in payments or net capital investment in cash terms.

² [Online budget glossary – Parliamentary Budget Office \(pbo.gov.au\)](https://pbo.gov.au)