

Heart Health Checks to stay for another two years – but more needed to fight killer disease

Thousands of Australians at risk of a life-threatening heart attack or stroke will be able to see their GP for a Medicare-subsidised Heart Health Check for another two years.

The Heart Foundation has applauded the Federal Government's decision to extend the temporary MBS items until 2023, but will continue to push for Heart Health Checks to be covered by Medicare permanently.

The leading heart health body also says it will continue to fight for more funding to tackle heart disease – Australia's single biggest killer.

Heart Foundation Group CEO, Adjunct Professor John Kelly, says Heart Health Checks save lives and money.

"Our new modelling shows a staggering 1.8 million Australians are missing out on the recommended blood pressure and cholesterol-lowering medicines needed to manage their risk of a heart attack or stroke," Professor Kelly said.

"In fact, more than 100,000 heart attacks, strokes and heart disease deaths could be avoided over the next five years if all people at high risk were on necessary medications – a figure that drives home how crucial Heart Health Checks are to fighting cardiovascular disease.

"Making this life-saving check available under Medicare for another two years will ensure Australians at risk of heart and vascular diseases are detected early and managed appropriately.

"While this is a welcome announcement, we will continue to push for Heart Health Checks to have a permanent spot on the MBS – a move that will help Australians live longer, healthier lives, and cut ongoing costs to our health system."

Heart Health Checks were introduced as temporary MBS items in 2019 and are available to Australians aged 45 and over, or from 30 if you're Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

"The check is quick, painless and the best thing you can do to find out your risk of heart attack and stroke in the next five years," Professor Kelly said.

Professor Kelly said the Heart Foundation was dedicated to continuing the fight to save Australian hearts.

"Coronary heart disease takes the lives of 50 Australians every day, or one every 29 minutes. Around 440 Australians are treated in hospital for heart disease each day. Across the country, about 580,000 people live with the daily pain, discomfort and challenges of heart disease.

"Statistics like these show that heart disease is a significant ongoing issue for Australia, and we will continue to advocate for vital programs to reduce its incidence and impact. The future health of Australians depends on it."