



RURAL LOADING » GUIDELINES

JANUARY 2009

THESE GUIDELINES PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRACTICE INCENTIVES PROGRAM (PIP) RURAL LOADING.

1. INTRODUCTION

The PIP provides a number of incentives that aim to encourage general practices to improve the quality of care provided to patients. Practices must be accredited or registered for accreditation against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) *Standards for general practices* to participate in the PIP.

Payments are made through the PIP:

- to encourage use of electronic health systems;
- to ensure patients have access to after hours care;
- to support rural practices;
- to encourage rural general practitioners (GPs) to provide procedural services;
- to support practices to employ practice nurses;
- to encourage practices to teach medical students;
- for participating in educational activities to improve prescribing behaviour;
- to encourage cervical screening;
- for best practice management of patients with asthma and diabetes;
- to encourage general practices in rural and remote areas to act as a referral point for women experiencing domestic violence; and
- to encourage GPs to provide increased and continuing services in Commonwealth-funded Residential Aged Care Facilities.

The PIP is administered by Medicare Australia on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

2. THE PIP RURAL LOADING

Practices participating in the PIP with a main practice location situated outside capital cities and other major metropolitan centres are automatically paid a rural loading. The rural loading recognises the difficulties of providing care, often with little professional support, in rural and remote areas. The PIP rural loading is higher for practices in more remote areas, in recognition of the added difficulties of providing medical care.

The PIP rural loading is applied to PIP practice payments. Service Incentive Payments (SIPs) and payments made through the General Practice Immunisation Incentive (GPII) do not attract a rural loading.

The rural loading varies with the remoteness of the practice and is based on the classification of the practice using the *Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) Classification, 1991 Census Edition* (Department of Primary Industries and Energy and Department of Human Services and Health, November 1994). Where a practice with multiple locations is eligible for a rural loading, the loading will be calculated based on the RRMA classification of the main practice location.

3. PRACTICE ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the PIP rural loading:

- the practice must participate in the PIP; and
- the main practice location must be in an eligible rural or remote area i.e. RRMA 3-7.

4. CALCULATING THE PIP RURAL LOADING

The rural loading is calculated by multiplying the practice's PIP payments by a percentage loading. The loading is automatically applied to PIP practice payments of practices in rural and remote areas. The rural loading is not applied to SIPs or payments through the GPII.

The following table provides the PIP rural loading applied for each RRMA classification and category.

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TABLE 1: PIP RURAL LOADING FOR EACH RRMA CATEGORY

RRMA classification and category	Examples of locations	Rural Loading
1. Capital City	Brisbane, Canberra	0%
2. Other metropolitan centre (pop ≥ 100,000)	Townsville, Newcastle, Geelong	0%
3. Large rural centre (pop 25,000-99,999)	Cairns, Mackay, Launceston	15%
4. Small rural centre (pop 10,000-24,999)	Gympie, Maryborough (Qld), Port Pirie	20%
5. Other rural area (pop < 10,000)	Ingham, Atherton, Byron Bay	40%
6. Remote centre (pop ≥ 5,000)	Mt Isa, Roma, Alice Springs	25%
7. Other remote area (pop < 5,000)	Normanton, Weipa, Yulara	50%

Medicare Australia can advise you of the RRMA classification of your practice location.

5. RRMA CLASSIFICATION QUERIES

If you would like to query the practice's RRMA classification, email your question to: pip@medicareaustralia.gov.au or post: GPO Box 2572 Adelaide SA 5001.

6. NO APPLICATION NECESSARY

Practices are not required to apply for the PIP rural loading. The rural loading is automatically applied by Medicare Australia to the PIP payments of rural practices.

7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE PRACTICE

The practice must:

- ensure information provided to Medicare Australia is accurate; and
- notify Medicare Australia in writing within 14 calendar days of any changes that may affect its eligibility for PIP payments.

MORE INFORMATION:

Web: www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/pip

Email: pip@medicareaustralia.gov.au

Phone: 1800 222 032*

Hours of operation are between
8:30 am – 5:00 pm
Australian Central Standard Time

*Call charges apply from mobile and pay phones only.

These Guidelines are for information purposes only. While it is presently intended that the Commonwealth will make payments as set out in these Guidelines, the making of payments is a matter in the sole discretion of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth may alter arrangements for the Practice Incentives Program at any time and without notice.

The Commonwealth does not accept any legal liability or responsibility for any injury, loss or damage incurred by the use of, reliance on, or interpretation of the information provided in these Guidelines.