



## Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Coalition

### A consensus statement on the use of telehealth for contraception and abortion care

#### Recommendations

- *That the Department of Health and Aged Care make the MBS telehealth item numbers for sexual and reproductive health permanently available.*
- *That federal and state governments widely promote the option of telehealth for sexual and reproductive health care amongst both clinicians and consumers to increase awareness of telehealth as an option to access services.*

#### Overview

The use of telehealth for contraception, abortion, and other sexual and reproductive health care services is comparable in safety, efficacy and acceptability to in-person services and can improve access to information and care<sup>(1-5)</sup>.

For abortion, telehealth can provide person-centered care and provide a high quality, empowering alternative for people seeking care in a stigmatised landscape<sup>(6)</sup>. Concerns surrounding abuse and reproductive coercion are misplaced, and safeguarding may be improved through the telemedical care pathway as victims may find it easier to engage with these services<sup>(7)</sup>

The American Society of Family Planning has provided guidance in relation to providing contraceptive care in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (and beyond), including the important role of telehealth (audio and video)<sup>(8)</sup>. They recommend that telehealth can be used to provide many aspects of contraceptive care (GRADE 1C)<sup>(8)</sup>. Both audio-video and audio-only consultations are acceptable forms of telehealth and clinicians may use them to provide contraceptive care according to patient preference (GRADE 1C)<sup>(8)</sup>.

Specific MBS telehealth item numbers for sexual and reproductive health were made temporarily available in Australia in 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was confirmed in May 2023 that these item numbers would continue to be available until at least the end of 2023. However, to promote access to affordable and accessible contraception and other essential sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for women living in regional and rural Australia, it is critical that these item numbers are made available on a permanent basis<sup>(9, 10)</sup>.

As many clinicians and consumers are not aware of the availability of telehealth as a mode of delivery of sexual and reproductive health care<sup>(11, 12)</sup>, it is also important to widely promote this option to increase awareness and access to care through clinician education and health promotion to the community.



## References

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