

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR COVID19 – AUSTRALIAN AND STATES

- Victoria as with other states were paid upfront into a national funding pool by Commonwealth funding.
- Victoria alone was allocated over 26 million dollars.
- The Victorian government gets a rebate from the Federal Government based on case numbers (even if they are false positives)

<https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/communique/covid19-npa.pdf>

- A former practising Health Information Manager & Clinical Coder, (“Anonymous Coder”) investigated what the coding rules were for Covid19 and found that misleading coding would reap more of the financial incentives. “Coding information is sourced from IHPA (Independent Hospital Pricing Authority), which is a government agency established under the Commonwealth. Its primary goal is to calculate and deliver an annual national efficient price (NEP), a benchmark for Australian hospital funding. This authority also provides the classification system for reporting of Covid19 State cases. In March 2020, the Commonwealth signed a national partnership on Covid19 response with all of the Australian States. Under this partnership, \$100 million is to be paid quarterly to the States based on a population share basis of reported cases of Covid. What really shocked me were the coding rules for Covid (coded information is the baseline data for reporting the total number of state cases). Under a ‘mandated screening by authority test’ or a ‘self-presenting non-mandated test’ (where there has been NO exposure and NO symptoms), the reporting guidelines state ‘for clinically diagnosed or probable cases where testing is inconclusive, unavailable or not specified’, Australian hospitals (including emergency and non-admitted care) are to assign;

Principal Diagnosis - B34.2 - “Coronavirus infection, unspecified site”

Additional diagnoses - U07.2 “Emergency use of U07.2, Coronavirus NOT identified”

This coding rule is a loop-hole that allows a principal diagnosis of Corona virus infection to be assigned to anyone who has been tested by mandated authority or has self-presented, where the person has had NO exposure, NO symptoms, & where testing results are INCONCLUSIVE, UNAVAILABLE or NOT SPECIFIED. References for coding/classification:

<https://www.coag.gov.au/.../files/communique/covid19-npa.pdf>, <https://www.ihsa.gov.au/what-we-do/how-to-classify-covid-19>

- In addition, further financial incentives were announced in the Australian Federal Budget: The following was captured in the 2020/21 Federal Budget:

‘The Government will clarify privileges and immunities, including income tax exemptions, available to Australian individuals performing short term missions on behalf of the International Monetary Fund (‘IMF’) and three institutions of the World Bank Group (‘WBG’). The measure will apply retrospectively from 1 July 2017.

This measure will clarify that Australian short-term experts are entitled to an exemption from income tax for their relevant income from the organisations. This aligns Australia’s domestic legislative framework with its international obligations and provides certainty for taxpayers. This outcome is consistent with Australia’s longstanding support for and contributions to the IMF and the WBG.’

Source National Tax & Accountants’ Association Ltd: 06 October 2020