

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **New South Wales Government proposes to cruelly remove full ambulance coverage for millions of NSW voters**

Matthew Koce, CEO of hirmaa, the peak body for 20 of Australia's not-for-profit, member owned and community based health insurers has warned that millions of NSW residents will be left without full ambulance cover if the State Government gets it way.

"The changes proposed by the State Government will strip the ability for private health insurers to cover non-emergency ambulance services under existing policy arrangements." Mr Koce said.

"This means that the 3.7 million people with private health insurance, or 47.6% of the NSW population, will no longer be covered for non-emergency ambulance services and will be exposed to very large out of pocket expenses of up to nearly \$6,000 per trip.<sup>1</sup>"

"Under the present ambulance system, private health insurers pay an Ambulance Levy to the Government of New South Wales to cover their policyholders for all emergency and non-emergency ambulance services."

"Threats by the State Government to axe the extent of cover under the levy is confusing, adds complexity and will have a devastating financial impact on families who will no longer have access to insurance for non-emergency ambulance services."

"The people of NSW presently have access to one of the best and most comprehensive ambulance services in the world. The changes being floated by the State Government will put all that in serious jeopardy."

"Consumers will no longer enjoy the assurance that comes with knowing all ambulance services are covered by their health insurance policy without any risk of out of pocket costs."

"The cost of non-emergency transport can run into the thousands of dollars and we do not want to see NSW families cruelly left in financial hardship through no fault of their own."

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/Accounts--Fees/Fees-and-Charges.html>

"I want to be very clear, the private health insurance industry does not support this mean spirited cut to ambulance services and strongly opposes any change that would leave consumers exposed to large out of pocket expenses, Mr Koce said".

"Of particular concern is the real possibility that people will forgo non-emergency ambulance services, for financial reasons, despite it being the best option on health grounds".

"Access to non-emergency transport is vitally important, especially for those living in regional and country NSW requiring transfer between hospitals to access appropriate specialist medical care often available only in the large cities."

"What the NSW Government are proposing is one of the most drastic and significant changes to the NSW ambulance system in a generation and we are very concerned that it is being rushed without adequate consultation."

"The level of confusion and angst that these changes to the ambulance system will cause cannot be overstated and we ask that the Federal Health Minister intervene on behalf of consumers as a priority."

"The proposed changes to NSW Ambulance services are a disaster in the making. As the peak body for not-for-profit health insurers, we are asking the Government of NSW to pause and give some serious consideration to the impact of these wide ranging cuts."

"The current system provides consumers with a very high level of assurance around ambulance cover but these changes being floated by the NSW Government will trash that very enviable record." Mr Koce said.

The New South Government is currently considering submissions from the sector on the proposed changes which if approved, are likely to come into effect on the 1 April 2017. *hirmaa's submission can be found [here](#) .*

*hirmaa is the national peak body for 20 not-for-profit, member owned and community based health insurers which together provide private health insurance for over one million Australians.*

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