

MEDIA RELEASE:

28.03.2018

Private Health reforms deliver for consumers

Matthew Koce, CEO of Members Health has congratulated the Turnbull Government and Minister for Health, Greg Hunt MP for moving quickly to implement a broad package of consumer health insurance reforms and has called on the Australian Parliament to quickly pass enacting Legislation.

“The sweeping legislation introduced today is to be commended for its unwavering and uncompromising focus on improving the consumer value and affordability of private health,” Mr Koce said.

“The three Bills outline provisions that will substantively reduce pressure on premiums, while promising improved transparency and access to health care for millions of Australians.”

“Nothing is more important than good health and the Alliance of Members Health funds share Minister Hunt’s commitment to make health insurance as accessible and affordable as possible.”

“These are perhaps the biggest and most far reaching reforms in a generation. They touch on almost every aspect of the private health system and deliver a holistic, long term vision that puts the consumer first and foremost,” said Mr Koce.

“The Member Health funds are not-for-profit, member owned and community based. They only exist to serve consumers and we welcome any effort to reduce pressure on premiums and improve consumer affordability and value for money.”

“The legislation introduced today is part of a package of reforms that includes over \$300 million in annual savings from cuts to overpriced medical devices such as pacemakers and artificial knees and hips. It is shocking that some medical devices were priced at over 200% higher in Australian private hospitals than in public hospitals or comparable overseas markets.”

“The Members Health funds operate on extremely narrow margins, returning around 90 cents in the premium dollar, back to consumers in health benefits. Unfortunately that is not the case elsewhere in the health system and we are particularly pleased that efforts are now well underway to provide consumers with easy to access information on medical practitioner performance and pricing.”

“There are some medical practitioners charging vulnerable patients massive out of pocket fees for very simple procedures. The Out-of-Pockets and Improved Value Care Working Groups referred to in the legislation are long overdue. They will for the first time help empower and inform consumer choice so that individuals can find a medical specialist that best meets their specific needs and circumstances.”

Putting members’ health before profit

“Young people are the big winners out of the legislation. For the first time, young people will be eligible to receive a discount from their health insurer of up to 10%.”

“Many younger Australians need health insurance but can’t afford it. Younger Australians tend to earn less and are confronted with mounting cost of living pressures - such as housing affordability and university debts. Allowing health insurers the option to offer a discount to younger Australians is a good thing. It will help younger Australians to take personal responsibility for their healthcare and avoid languishing on long and unpleasant public hospital waiting lists that can run into the years.”

“People requiring Mental Health support are also key beneficiaries of the legislation. Waiting periods for mental health policy upgrades will be eliminated on a one off basis. This means that anyone with private health insurance will be guaranteed access to the highest quality mental health services when they need it.”

“Australians living in rural and regional areas will now be able to get health insurance cover for travel and accommodation expense, when medical services are not available in their local community.”

“People living in the country can find it very difficult getting access to the major hospitals. Thanks to Minister Hunt, private patients in rural and regional areas will now be able to access the best available medical treatments in no matter where they live.”

“The private health system provides around half the Australian population with outstanding access to fast and efficient high quality care.”

“Private health is critical to the Australian health system. Last year it generated \$20 Billion dollars in health care services that would otherwise have to be paid for by taxpayers, putting already overstretched public hospital waiting lists under extraordinary pressure.”

“The fact that the Australian Government continues to fully support private health and the interests of private health consumers highlights the value of the industry and the clear benefits it offers.”

“We again congratulate the Turnbull Government and the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt MP, for acting in the interests of private health consumers and look forward to working on the implementation of these important reforms.”

Members Health is the peak industry body for 23 health insurers which are not-for-profit, member-owned and community based. In all, the Members Health funds provide private health insurance to over 1.7 million Australians.

Putting members’ health before profit

A. 601 Canterbury Road, Surrey Hills, VIC 3127 **P.** PO Box 172, Box Hill, VIC 3128

T. (03) 8831 3372 **E.** info@membershealth.com.au **W.** membershealth.com.au **ABN.** 43 358 871 550