

MEDIA RELEASE:

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Members Health welcomes decision to rally full strength of Australia's public and private health systems to fight COVID-19

The Alliance of Members Health Funds welcomes the Australian Government's announcement today to partner with the private hospital sector to ensure the country is best equipped to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

"This is an unprecedented move, ensuring the viability of the country's entire world-leading health system so Australia can tackle this virus head-on and with the best-possible resources at hand," said Members Health CEO Matthew Koce.

The Government today guaranteed the viability and capacity of the entire private hospital sector, securing over 30,000 hospital beds, and the sector's skilled workforce of more than 105,000.

"Nobody wants to see jobs lost. This announcement protects the jobs of tens of thousands of highly skilled healthcare workers who are desperately needed."

As part of the guarantee, announced on Tuesday, the Commonwealth will offer agreements to all 657 private and not-for-profit hospitals in return for their capacity during the coronavirus response.

"Australia's private health care sector is a vital element of the country's overall health system," Mr Koce said.

"Private hospitals are renowned for their quality of care and highly skilled practitioners. The ban on all elective surgery could have left these extremely important healthcare resources underutilised and at risk during this uncertain time. But thanks to the leadership of Minister Hunt the sector's capacity to resume services as soon as the epidemic has passed has been preserved."

"Australia's entire health care system needs to work together to tackle this looming crisis, so all Australians have the best chance at getting the care they need and coming out healthy."

"Australia consistently ranks as having one of the best healthcare systems among OECD countries because of its public-private balance. The private system is a vital pressure valve for the public system, taking care of more than two thirds of all elective surgeries in the country, and now providing crucial additional capacity when it matters most."

Members Health is the peak body for 27 funds that are not for profit or part of a not-for-profit group – some of which have been operating for more than 100 years.

Our funds are industry leaders in providing top quality private hospital cover.

Many Members Health funds operate private hospitals or clinics in key regional hubs, including Townsville, Mildura, Newcastle, Cessnock/Hunter Valley, Lithgow, Wollongong, the Latrobe Valley, Burnie and Launceston.

"This announcement ensures those communities will still have access to these extremely important services," Mr Koce said.

Mr Koce said Australia's private health insurance industry was also responding swiftly to the unfolding crisis by rolling a raft of support measures.

Putting members' health before profit



Many funds are launching innovative new virtual, in-home and telehealth services to ensure the social distancing restrictions do not impede important health treatments such as chemotherapy, dialysis, mental health and physio. They are also delaying their 1 April scheduled premium increase, offering premium discounts for those facing financial hardship, providing ex-gratia payments to ensure those whose level of cover does not extend to COVID-19 get the care they need.

“If you are a health fund member and have COVID-19 has impacted your employment or financial situation, you could be eligible for temporary premium waivers, discounts or other supports. It’s very important that you contact your fund to see how they can help,” said Mr Koce.

Members Health is the peak industry body for an alliance of 27 health funds that are not-for-profit or part of a not-for-profit group, member owned, regional and community based. They all share the common ethic of putting their members’ health before profit. Our funds represent the interests of more than 3 million Australians.

Media Queries

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Putting members’ health before profit

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