Members Health
FUND ALLIANCE

MEDIA RELEASE:

Members Health Calls for National Reform to Strengthen Healthcare and Bolster Economic Prosperity and Social Wellbeing

Members Health is calling for major reforms to boost health care accessibility and affordability and improve transparency of hospitals and doctors across Australia as part of a landmark report released today for the not-for-profit health insurance sector.

The '*Economic and Social Impact of the Members Health funds of Australia'*, released today, shows not-for-profit and member-owned health insurers serve over 5.3 million people, including more than 1.1 million across our regional and remote areas. Accounting for 80% of funds in the market, the 24 insurers contribute over $21.8 billion per annum to GDP, over 155,000 direct and indirect jobs, provide access to 6.4 million hospital bed days, 510,000 elective surgeries, and 37.8 million extras services.

"From Australia's earliest beginnings, not-for-profit and member-owned health insurance funds have stood alongside families – from the cities to our regional and remote areas – playing a vital role in healthcare delivery and the nation's economic and social wellbeing," Matthew Koce, CEO of Members Health said.

"Good health is fundamental to productivity, wellbeing and economic prosperity. Australia's private healthcare system is the envy of the world, but given cost of living pressures and long public hospital waits, there is an immediate imperative to further improve affordability, accessibility and consumer empowerment for Australian families."

The '*Economic and Social Impact of the Members Health funds of Australia'* report outlines four key consumer reforms to support improved access to and affordability of private health insurance, in turn bolstering the state's productivity and reducing pressure on public hospitals:

- **Return the Australian government rebate on private health insurance premiums back from under 25% to 30%** to help cut premium prices so more Australians can afford the benefits of private health care.

- **Mandate greater transparency of pricing and performance for hospitals and clinicians** to help empower consumer choice in selecting the right medical practitioner and hospital for them.

- **End the government ban on health funds helping to cover patient out-of-pockets for GP visits.** Helping cover GP out of pocket costs will make primary care more accessible, delivering better health outcomes and reducing hospitalisations.

- **Exempt private health insurance premiums from the Fringe Benefits Tax.** Providing employees with fast access to high quality care that can be scheduled, will help make Australia's economy more productive.

"We want health insurance members to be in control of their healthcare, and that can only occur if consumers are empowered with access to information on price and performance of healthcare providers. Sadly, it is easier to compare a fridge for price and performance than something as important as a medical specialist or hospital before going under the knife," said Mr Koce.

"Mandating these reforms to improve affordability, access and empower consumers and GPs to select the right clinician and hospital, is long overdue."

About Members Health:

Members Health is the peak industry body for an alliance of 24 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 5.3 million Australians.

About the report:

This report, commissioned by Members Health on behalf of its 24 constituent member health insurers, details the historic, social and economic contribution of the sector, and how their work supports broader well-being for Australian consumers and the wider community. It also highlights the role private health insurance sector has in supporting Australia's productivity and growth.

Media Queries

Brenton Baldwin
Brenton.Baldwin@membershealth.com.au
0409 517 176

Eddie Morton
MembersHealth@Sandpipercomms.com
0499 700 295