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Level 3, 11 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600. PO Box 7426, Canberra BC ACT 2610. [P]: (02) 6273 9000, [F]: (02) 6273 7000, [W]: www.apha.org.au

2009 BUDGET

The focus this week is on the Federal Budget, handed down on 12 May. The Government announced a measure to means test the 30% private health insurance rebate. In his speech in reply to the Budget on 14 May, the Leader of the Opposition stated that the Opposition parties would block this measure. The legislation to change the rebate has yet to be introduced into Parliament and there will be considerable activity around this issue in the weeks ahead. APHA will keep members updated through the Bulletin.

APHA has put out two media releases on the Budget which can be seen on our website:

- [Private Health Insurance Rebate Changes are Confusing, Complex and Costly](#)
- [Opposition's Budget Reply: A Win-Win for Health](#)

Other Budget measures

There are a number of other measures announced in the Budget that have potential impact on private hospitals. These are:

New cancer centres

\$560 million has been allocated to build a network of up to ten best-practice regional cancer centres and associated accommodation centres. The centres will be selected following a national tender process open to both the public and private sectors.

Changes to Medicare Benefits Schedule

The rebate for some procedures will be reduced. The Government has given the example of cataract surgery, which can now often be performed safely in 15-20 minutes. There will be

a lower schedule fee for shorter and less complex common procedures, and a higher fee for complex, time intensive procedures.

Changes to Extended Medicare Safety Net (EMSN)

From 1 January 2010, the Government will change the EMSN to provide a maximum safety net benefit, or 'cap', for those MBS services where the Government believes there is evidence that the EMSN is being used "to excessively increase the income of specialists, rather than reduce costs for patients". These changes will apply to obstetrics, assisted reproductive technology (ART), cataract operations, the injection of a therapeutic substance into an eye, hair transplants for alopecia, and varicose vein treatment. For each item that is capped, the Government will only provide safety net benefits up to a maximum amount.

Changes to Diagnostic Imaging

From 1 July 2011 the Medicare fee for diagnostic imaging services provided on older, fully depreciated equipment. The aim of this measure is to encourage investment in new equipment.

The APHA is seeking more detail on these issues and other aspects of the Health Budget. We will keep members informed.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESSES AT PRIVATE HOSPITALS

The deadline for submission of articles for the next edition of *Private Hospital* magazine is tomorrow. Please send any submissions for the magazine through to Lisa Ramshaw at lisa.ramshaw@apha.org.au.

ACHS MEMBER SURVEY

ACHS has recently distributed a survey to all EQuIP Members to obtain member feedback on the EQuIP Program, surveys and surveyors, education services, the Electronic Assessment Tool and communication issues.

APHA encourages all member hospitals who participate in the EQuIP program to respond to this survey so that private hospital views are adequately represented (particularly suggestions for improvement). The surveys are due back to ACHS by 22 May.

3rd Medical Indemnity Forum

The 3rd Medical Indemnity Forum will be held Friday 28 August 2009 in Sydney. A copy of the full program and registration form is available at: www.miiia.com.au

This year's forum focuses on the challenges of national registration, mandatory reporting and the global financial environment.

APHA Website Development News

APHA's website is currently undergoing a facelift and makeover. We hope to unveil the new site to the world very soon but members who will want access to the members' only portion of the website will need a new username and password.

Two weeks ago, we sent out forms for each hospital member to update their contact details. Please return your forms ASAP to APHA (marie.mccoy@apha.org.au) in order to be able to use the website from the moment it launches.