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## Private health insurance reform a priority for new Minister

A number of key reforms must remain the focus for new Health Minister Greg Hunt, including work to improve the affordability and transparency of private health insurance.

Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Mr Michael Roff welcomed Mr Hunt to the role, and looks forward to working with him to improve private health insurance for Australians.

“There should be little lag on the reform agenda as far as private health is concerned. The move to improve private health insurance for Australians was part of the Coalitions’ election platform and this work has been continuing with a number of Ministerial committees.

“APHA is very supportive of this work, having long campaigned for private health insurance policies written in plain English, with standardised medical terms across policies and transparent medical bills. These are measures that will improve consumers understanding of their policies and ensure they are getting the health care cover they need.

“Our research shows that few Australians understand what their cover provides, including 40% of health fund members who don’t know if their policy excludes cover for key services. This situation has to change, particularly when some large health insurers are trying to remove benefits for mental health and rehabilitation.

“Policies with multiple exclusions and so-called “public hospital only” policies are next to useless for consumers.

“The new Minister could act quickly to end these junk policies, a move which has bipartisan support. These policies cost Australians, while providing little real cover beyond the services already covered by Medicare. Doing away with these policies would be an easy win for the new Minister.

Mr Roff said there also needed to be action on the increasing number of private patients treated in public hospitals – essentially slugging Australians twice for their health care.

“You pay for Medicare through your taxes, why you should then pay a public hospital through your insurance for a service they are already funded to provide via Medicare is little more than a rort.

“When we are about to see premium increases announced for private health insurance it’s worth remembering that this public hospital practice costs health funds more than \$1 billion each year, and it is a key factor in premium growth,” he said.

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