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Prostheses review framework sets reform agenda

The Prostheses List review framework released yesterday gives the private health sector guidance on the agenda for further reform of the list, said Australian Private Hospital Association (APHA) CEO Michael Roff.

The targeted reviews announced by Health Minister Greg Hunt indicate hip, knee, cardiac and spinal categories will come in for special attention from the Prostheses List Advisory Committee (PLAC).

While knees, hips and cardiac devices had already been cut, spinal categories is a new area for review.

Mr Roff said the area of prostheses reform is complex and the right place for these discussions and deliberations is the PLAC.

“APHA supports the work of the PLAC, along with the other committees working on private health insurance reform. We believe the process outlined by Government should be properly worked through. Arbitrary cuts to the prostheses list could result in increased gap payments for patients, negating any premium drop.

“APHA believes private health insurance does require reform so Australians see the value in their insurance. Every year Australians experience confusion about their private health insurance policies and see the impact on their family budgets when they are slugged by premium increases,” he said.

Mr Roff argued there were faster and simpler ways to cut premiums available to Government.

“The Federal Government could add significant funds to their Budget bottom line next week by ending the practice of private patients being asked to use their health insurance in the public system.

“This practice rorts upwards of \$1 billion that could be cut from health insurance premiums every year, having an immediate effect on the family budget,” he said.

Mr Roff said the reforms also need to provide an opportunity for new technologies to be included on the Prostheses List.

“New medical device technologies have been introduced to Australia that save lives and improve quality of life post-surgery for thousands of Australians. Unfortunately, they don’t meet the prostheses list criteria that would make them affordable for consumers.

“APHA welcomes the opportunity to comment further on the review process,” Mr Roff said.

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