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Private patients in public hospital numbers up again

A significant jump in private patients treated in public hospitals in the past quarter shows raising revenue is prioritised over providing care, and public patients are left stranded on waiting lists, says Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Mr Michael Roff.

The March quarter Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) private health insurance statistics released today show a 4 percent increase in privately insured patients treated in public hospitals this quarter.

This means more than 800,000 public hospital episodes of care were funded through private health insurance in the past 12 months, resulting in health insurers unnecessarily paying out \$1.1 billion to public hospitals and forcing premiums up.

Mr Roff said this is devastating news for anyone on a public waiting list.

“It means more people without the ability to pay for private health care will be left waiting for their surgery. We know that public hospitals let private patients jump the queue, with public patients waiting twice as long for treatment compared to insured patients. So the more private patients they treat, the longer public patients have to wait.

“The public health system was designed to provide health care to all Australians regardless of their capacity to pay. Now we see more and more public hospitals revenue raising through privately insured patients rather than delivering on their core objective under Medicare.

“Unfortunately the public hospitals are making a rod for their own backs – and penalising their patients – by continuing to choose private health insurance revenue over patients’ clinical care needs,” Mr Roff said.

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