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Increasing numbers of Australians using private hospitals

March quarter private health insurance figures released today show a year-on-year increase in private hospital episodes of care, continuing the trend of Australians seeking out private care if they need it.

The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) data on private health insurance reported 3.73 million episodes of care in private hospitals in the 12 months ending 31 March 2020, an increase of 1.1 percent over the previous year. This is despite the fact there was a decline in the number of Australians with health insurance.

Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Michael Roff said Australians appreciate the high quality care they can access in the private hospital system.

“We know Australians have been using their insurance to get the care they need. They value the private hospital system allowing them to access care at a time that suits them, with the doctor of their choice.

“Unfortunately, due to the response to COVID-19, where private hospital resources were committed to being available for pandemic related services, and due to the restrictions on elective surgery, many insured patients have been unable to access the essential surgery they require.

“The pandemic has made it clear to all the fundamental value proposition of private health insurance is providing access to private hospitals.

“Now surgical services are starting to come back on line sooner than was originally envisaged, we hope the health insurance companies remember what their product is really about. They need to ensure every Australian with health insurance has a product that will cover them for the services they need in a private hospital,” Mr Roff said.

There is no doubt the last few months have been extremely challenging for the sector. The next challenge is ensuring we can transition back to normal levels of service and beyond, to clear the backlog of surgery built up in both the public and private sectors.

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The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) is the peak industry body representing the private hospital and day surgery sector. The private hospital sector treats 3.73 million patients a year, including treatment of more than a third of chemotherapy, 60 percent of all surgery, 74 percent of all elective musculoskeletal surgery and 79 percent of rehabilitation.