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MEDIA RELEASE

AHIA 2009 Conference

Private Health Insurance: Investing in the Future

The future of Private Health Insurance in Australia, the implementation of Clinical Guidelines in patient treatment and the non-payment of “Never Events” will be key topics at the Australian Health Insurance Association’s (AHIA) 2009 Conference in Melbourne this week.

AHIA CEO Dr Michael Armitage said the 2009 Conference, *Private Health Insurance: Investing in the Future*, would draw on international as well as domestic expertise to explore ways of improving the Australian health system.

“The health insurance sector is facing a period of unprecedented challenge and change. We’ve witnessed the impact of a Government with a stated objective of driving massive reform in the delivery of health services across the nation.

“The Private Health Insurance Industry represents more than half of the Australian population (11.3 million people) and all Australians have to be prepared to make changes which improve safety and quality in the Australian health system into the future.

“The recent draft Productivity Commission Report says the private health sector has shorter waiting times, shorter lengths of stay, higher productivity and provides a safer health care environment. However we can always do better, said Dr Armitage.

The Conference will hear from the Medical Director of the New York State Department of Health, Dr Foster Gesten, who was integral in introducing a system of non-payment for “Never Events” which include events such as surgery being performed on the wrong part of the body or on the wrong person.



Medical commentator Dr Phil Hammond from the UK will also address the Conference and cover issues including the use of Clinical Guidelines and patient rights. Dr Hammond gave evidence to the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry into the death rate for children having open heart surgery in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Conference will be opened by Pat Anderson, well known for her many years of advocacy for the health of Indigenous peoples. She was the co-author of the Little Children are Sacred report into abuse of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory, and is currently Chairperson of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health.

The Minister for Health Nicola Roxon and Shadow Health spokesman Peter Dutton will also address delegates. Other speakers include Professor Justin Oakley (*Monash University Human Bioethics*), and Dr Helen Zorbas (*National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre*).

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