



17 November 2008

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**PRESIDENT**  
Mr Richard Bowden  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
Hon Dr Michael Armitage

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **MORE THAN 11 MILLION AUSTRALIANS PRIVATELY INSURED**

The Australian Health Insurance Association (AHIA) has welcomed the release of figures today showing that more than 11 million Australians held some form of Private Health Insurance membership at the end of September 2008.

The release of the Private Health Insurance Administration Council's (PHIAC) September 2008 quarter statistics shows that PHI membership increased for both Hospital and General Treatment Cover.

The proportion of the Australian population with hospital cover increased by 0.2% from 44.6% to 44.8% compared to the June 2008 quarter. The largest increase in hospital membership occurred among singles with almost 16,000 taking out cover during the September quarter. Family membership increased by almost 15,000, bringing total hospital policies from 4,585,293 to a record 4,615,824.

Hospital Treatment Cover increased in all States and Territories (except Victoria which remained static) during the quarter. WA has the highest proportion of the population with private hospital cover (50.3%) while NT has the lowest (33.9%). The proportion of the Australian population with General Treatment Cover increased by 1.2% from 49.8% to 51% compared to the June 2008 quarter.

Australian Health Insurance Chief Executive Officer, Hon. Dr Michael Armitage said the continuing increase in the number of Australians taking out both Hospital and General Treatment Cover demonstrates that Australians recognise the value of PHI.

Dr Armitage warned however that the impact of the Government's Medicare Levy Surcharge (MLS) threshold changes would not be realised for some months and that any reduction on PHI membership will impact significantly on the public health system.

"Australia enjoys a balanced health care system and everyone should be concerned about the impact the Government's MLS changes will have on public hospital waiting lists and on PHI premiums.

"In the current economic climate it is more important than ever that the Government remain committed to the future of the private health sector through all the incentives which encourage Australians to remain privately insured. Further tampering with the current system will only increase pressure on our already overstretched public hospital system", Dr Armitage said.

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