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MEDIA RELEASE

Private Health – A Safer Option

The Australian Health Insurance Association says the Productivity Commission's Draft Report provides further evidence that the Government's proposal to dismantle the 30% Rebate is flawed public policy.

The Draft Report supports calls from the vast majority of health and consumer organisations for the Government to continue to support the private health sector and give all Australians the opportunity to choose their health care provider.

Not only does the private sector deliver shorter waiting times, shorter lengths of stay and higher productivity, but most importantly it provides a safer health care environment.

One of the key finds of the PC Draft Report is that it identifies that the private sector has lower overall infection rates than the public sector. The AHIA has long been supporting calls from medical experts for tighter infection control practices in hospitals around Australia.

International studies show that between 5-10% of all people who are admitted to hospital develop a healthcare acquired infection. In Australia there are likely to be 400 people or more who will die from MRSA infections each year.

Accurate data collection is crucial if the Australian health system is to continually improve its service delivery. The Report highlights the inadequacies of the system in this area by identifying that inconsistent collection methods and missing information have hindered its ability to do its job.

Dr Armitage said the Report's claim that prosthetic costs were higher in the private sector came as no surprise. The Industry had been applying pressure to the Government about rising costs in this area and wants all prostheses to undergo appropriate clinical trials before being made available in Australia.

The Report points to the private hospital sector as the safest option for Australian patients, therefore it makes no sense for the Australian Government to divert resources from the private health sector only to place increased pressure on the public hospital system and force up premiums for those Australians who take responsibility for their own health care by taking out private health cover.

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