



COVID-19 crisis: no place for misinformation and irresponsible political games

The Australian Greens have acted irresponsibly by spreading misinformation, creating confusion and anxiety about access to healthcare during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Using the COVID-19 crisis to undermine Australia’s private health sector is incredibly irresponsible and politically immature. In the current environment, political point scoring has been put aside and the well-being of the Australian people and our economy at the forefront of decision making,” said Private Healthcare Australia Chief Executive Dr Rachel David.

“Those who are perpetuating propaganda about ‘cancelling’ private health insurance are doing a great disservice to the many Australians who will need their health cover now and in the future. Private health continues to play a significant and important role in performing and funding vital healthcare.

As the Health Minister Greg Hunt explained this week in relation to the role of private hospitals and health funds: *“...there will be very much for all of the non-coronavirus-related conditions continued access and needs - whether it's in relation to cardiac, or cancer, or rehabilitation, or so many of the other areas, allied health services, that are covered. So there will remain a very, very significant and important role for the ongoing private health and private health insurance services.”* (ABC Radio Melbourne, 1 April 2020)

Here are the facts:

- Consumers still need hospital treatment for diseases and illnesses apart from COVID-19 and private health insurance will cover this.
- Health fund members can still elect to be treated as private patients when admitted to hospital for treatment, including if they have COVID-19.
- Private health insurance will be the sole funder of many mental health and urgent surgery claims during this crisis.
- Private health insurance will continue to fund vital treatments and surgeries such as pregnancy, cancer, cardiac and in-patient mental health treatment to name a few. Members are still able to choose their own specialist for continuity of care.
- Eligible members will have access to vital physiotherapy and psychology telehealth services.
- Many allied health services are still operating as normal. Funds continue to cover emergency dental cover.
- Demand for elective surgery will likely rebound and create a huge bottleneck in the health system in six months. Having PHI means members can avoid even longer public hospital wait lists – by having access to timely private care with their choice of doctor.

Health funds have postponed the 1 April premium increase for six months and are offering premium relief to members who have lost their job or are underemployed as a result of COVID-19. Dr David said health fund members should talk to their fund before considering downgrading or dropping their cover.

ENDS

Media contact: Jen Eddy 0439 240 755