



Press Release

29 July 2016

Consumers will win from *Whitecoat* joint venture

“Australian health funds are taking a significant step towards improving the healthcare experiences of consumers through the launch of the expanded *Whitecoat* initiative,” PHA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Rachel David said today.

“The expanded *Whitecoat* highlights how the private health insurance industry and Health Minister Sussan Ley are absolutely on the same page on improving consumer experiences, choice and value, as raised in her review of Private Health Insurance regulation.”

“The new partnership between nib, HBF and Bupa demonstrates the commitment of funds to improving services for health consumers. *Whitecoat* will become the go-to site for consumers looking for healthcare, and health fund members will be able to access the information they need to make informed choices about private medical providers,” she said.

“The expansion of this service from nib to include Bupa and HBF will make *Whitecoat* a national service for consumers and providers. Health consumers want more information to enable them to make better choices and this is a major step in that direction, but health professionals will also benefit through the ability to promote their services nationally, rather than to a narrow geographic referral base.

“The beauty of the new, expanded *Whitecoat* site is that while health funds are making a significant investment in the digital platform, it will be independently managed. This gives consumers a genuine opportunity to take greater control of their healthcare, and make informed decisions.

The site is currently populated by allied health ‘extras’ providers such as dentists and physiotherapists, however the *Whitecoat* service will soon expand to include medical health professionals like surgeons, GPs and other specialists. This will set a precedent in Australia and put quality of healthcare and access to information at consumers’ fingertips.

“The issues of affordability, accessibility and quality in healthcare, should be priorities for health funds and the Federal Government. Health funds are committed to working closely with the Government to deliver reforms which will achieve these goals for consumers.

“In addition to this important venture by nib, HBF and Bupa, Private Healthcare Australia member funds are also making a considerable investment in work to help consumers navigate what can be a complex system, including making it easier to choose health fund products based on cost and need. Part of this involves work with health professionals to help consumers and GPs choose specialist services based on transparency of out-of-pocket costs.

“More than half of the population, 13.4 million Australians, have some form of private health insurance. Recent research shows that greater than 80 per cent of health fund members value their PHI because it gives them security, through confidence they can access medical treatment when



Private Healthcare Australia
Better Cover. Better Access. Better Care.

Press Release

and where they need it. The data also reveals lack of transparency on out-of-pocket costs is a major turn-off for consumers trying to use their health insurance.”

“Almost half of all Australians with PHI have an annual income of less than \$50,000, and are making sacrifices to afford private healthcare. They deserve to have easy access to information on both performance and costs,” said Dr David.

Media contact: Steven Fanner – 0402 913 603 or steven.fanner@pha.org.au