



Greens path of destruction for Australian health

Private Healthcare Australia Chief Executive Doctor Rachel David said the Greens' plan to abolish the means-tested PHI rebate would put choice in health care out of reach for low-income earners and put unsustainable pressure on public hospitals.

"No serious health policy-maker would contemplate the Greens proposal to abolish the PHI rebate as even a vague option for the future of Australia's health system. It would force low and middle-income earning Australians, the people who benefit from the means-tested rebate, out of the private system and add enormous pressure to public hospital wait lists," she said.

"The Greens are ideologically opposed to the private sector in all portfolio areas and launch the same attack on the private health sector before every Federal Election.

"Both major political parties understand the critical role the PHI rebate plays in maintaining balance in our mixed private public health system and ensuring its sustainability into the future. The balance between our public and private systems is vital to maintaining our world class health system.

"More than half of the Australian population, 13.5 million people rely on PHI for their health care. Research repeatedly shows that 80% of them value their PHI and want to keep it. They believe they get value for money and in addition to the timing of medical treatment they cite choice of specialist for continuity of care and choice of hospital as the main reasons. (IPSOS)

"It's a myth that PHI is for the wealthy. More than half of the 13.5 million people who hold PHI have disposable incomes under \$50,000 per annum. Many of these are full pensioners and superannuants who are making considerable sacrifices to maintain their health insurance. These are the people the Greens will disadvantage most.

"Financial incentives including the means-tested rebate are a proven way to promote participation and keep private cover more affordable for all Australians. An independent study into the financing of Australia's health system concluded that at current settings, a dollar spent by the Government on the PHI Rebate is up to 15% more efficient than a dollar directed to the public system. (Evaluate).

"The private sector plays a crucial key role in Australia's health system, performing over two-thirds of non-emergency surgery in Australia. 60% of all surgical procedures carried out in Australia are performed in private hospitals each year.

"Successive governments have supported private health and the rebate, because the economics stack up, and there is overwhelming public support for Australia's mixed private and public health system," Dr David said.

Private Healthcare Australia is the peak representative body for Australia's private health insurance industry. PHA represents 22 Australian health funds with a combined membership of 13 million Australians, or 97% of the sector on membership. Promoting the value of private health insurance to consumers in the Australian economy and keeping premiums affordable for our members is the number one priority of PHA members.

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