



Health funds Postpone 1 April Premium Increase

Private Healthcare Australia Chief executive Dr Rachel David announced that member health funds will postpone the 1 April premium increase for at least six months. The announcement is part of a large package of support measures to relieve pressure on consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent weeks health funds have been working with government and regulators on approval for measures to ease financial pressure on their members, while maintaining essential health services including critical dental care.

Health funds in conjunction with the Department of Health will review the measure prior to six months after reassessing growth in demand for non-emergency surgery and the impact of COVID-19 on the Australian health system.

“This is a continuing process and health funds will be regularly reviewing their financial position in coming months to provide as much support as possible to members. It is a tough time for all Australians and circumstances are changing rapidly. We will do all we can to support our members and the Australian community,” said CEO Dr Rachel David.

“At the same time health funds also need to maintain the government’s legislated capital adequacy requirements and must remain in good shape so we can fund the backlog of elective surgery that will certainly occur in 6-12 months’ time,” she said.

Dr David has urged members whose financial circumstances have changed, to talk to their health fund before considering downgrading or dropping their health cover.

In addition to postponing the premium increase for six months (some health funds* have waived the increase for 12 months) health funds are targeting financial relief to those most in need, people who have lost their jobs, are underemployed or have contracted the virus. Other measures include:

- All hospital policies – from Basic to Gold – will include full hospital coverage for people affected by COVID-19
- People experiencing financial hardship as a result of the crisis will be able to access relief from premium costs – members are urged to contact their health fund directly
- Health funds are covering telehealth services from psychologists from Monday 30 March
- Health funds will cover telehealth services from other allied health professions where practical and clinically appropriate. Funding for tele-physiotherapy services has already been announced, with more announcements concerning additional professions to be made in the coming days.
- Health funds will continue to provide access to and reimburse emergency dental services and will direct members needing access appropriately.
- We are putting in place special arrangements to allow more hospital in the home services and more remote access services for our members at particular risk [subject to government approval]

ENDS

**HBF has waived the increase for 12 months. Support measures introduced may vary between health funds.*

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