



Health funds back private hospital capacity guarantee

Private Healthcare Australia (PHA) has backed calls by a coalition of private hospital operators for a national approach to guaranteeing private hospital capacity to keep critical staff employed.

“We need a coordinated national response to ensure doctors and nurses working in private hospitals keep their jobs. This is critical in the current environment,” PHA Chief Executive Dr Rachel David said.

“The public hospital system alone will not be able to cope with the pressure and the post COVID surge in non-emergency surgery.

“We must maintain the full capacity of our world class private hospital system particularly in the area of surgery – the demand for surgery has been paused, it is still there and not going away.

“Private hospitals need capacity to take care of emergencies in the short term and to manage the bottleneck of non-emergency surgery that will undoubtedly follow this crisis.

“Parking essential health workers at home while the rest of the sector is under enormous pressure is not the answer. It will create a crisis in surgery waiting lists down the track when the COVID-19 crisis is over.”

Demand for elective surgery is likely to rebound and create a huge bottleneck in the health system in six months. Australia’s health funds are doing everything possible to ease financial pressure on their members and continue to provide essential health services. This includes funding some vital telehealth services for psychology and physiotherapy.

If a consumer’s financial circumstances change, they are encouraged to talk to their health fund before considering whether to drop their cover.

ENDS



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Press Release

Notes to the Editor

COVID19 – What health funds are doing

- Every single hospital policy – from Basic to Gold – will include full coverage for hospital costs 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. Consumers should contact their health fund direct.
- 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].



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About PHA

Private Healthcare Australia is the peak representative body for Australia's private health insurance industry. PHA represents 24 Australian health funds with a combined membership of over 13 million Australians, or 97% of the sector on membership.

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