



Press Release

22 April 2020

Patients will be treated according to clinical urgency

Private Healthcare Australia Chief Executive Dr Rachel David said the Australian Government's announcement on the staged return of elective (essential non-emergency) surgery made it clear that patients would be prioritised on the basis of clinical need.

"I have spoken with Government at the highest levels and our interpretation of the current arrangements is that elective surgery is currently being scheduled on the basis of clinical need and people who need elective surgery should speak with their treating medical specialist.

"This is a clinical decision for medical specialist doctors, and the hospitals in which they work. Urgent procedures for patients, whether they be private or public are being scheduled at the moment and Australians will be treated fairly and on the basis of clinical urgency.

"This is determined by the treating doctor and the hospital. There is no mechanism to 'push private patients to the bottom of a waiting list', as suggested in some media reports."

Dr David said the conditions requiring urgent surgery included people in severe pain and distress that cannot be managed at home, people at risk of permanently losing a bodily function such as mobility, vision or hearing and those faced with a significant deterioration if their surgery is further delayed.

Patients who have had surgery cancelled or delayed, or who think their condition may have deteriorated should contact their treating doctor to discuss re-scheduling their treatment.

Private healthcare provides two out of three elective surgeries in Australia.

ENDS

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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