



Private Healthcare valued by consumers

The value of private health insurance has been verified by the Health Care Complaints Commission 2016-17 Annual Report, which found that a patient in a public hospital is six times more likely to complain to the Commission than a patient in a private hospital.

This is consistent with IPSOS research, which shows that 80% of Australians with private health insurance believe they get value for their money, and want to keep it.

PHA Chief Executive Dr Rachel David said a Morgan Stanley report claiming the public hospital system was capable of handling all Australia's medical needs was wrong and had failed to consider a range of factors involved in the health care experience.

'There is no doubt if you have experienced a catastrophic health event and are brought in on a stretcher, Australia's world-class public hospital system is the best place to be. There are however a number of less acute, but highly debilitating conditions for which access to care is much less certain, which is why people choose private health, said Dr David.

"There are many conditions which can seriously impact younger people, limiting their ability to get and hold down a job, or form a relationship. These include disabling sporting injuries and other accidents which are not life-threatening but limit the capacity to work, mental health admissions for eating disorders and chronic anxiety/depression and dental surgery.

"Timely access to public hospital treatment for these conditions is patchy at best, and in some outer suburban and regional areas, access to common types of non-emergency surgery may take years. One of the problems is consumers have little or no information about how long wait times are for a particular condition in public hospitals in their area, and without private health insurance, they can be in for a nasty surprise.

"People with private health insurance have chosen it because it gives them control over the timing of medical treatment, and also access to fully trained specialists who take responsibility for their care. In contrast to the claims in the Morgan Stanley report, State Government data shows in many areas public hospitals are already overwhelmed and under stress," said Dr David.

In 2015-16, there were 3,122,333 separations from NSW hospitals. 1,861,163 (59.6%) were from public hospitals. There were 1,261,170 (40.4%) separations from private hospitals.

In the same year the Health Care Complaints Commission received 1137 complaints about hospitals. 1016 (89.4%) were about public hospitals. 121 (10.6%) were about private hospitals.

When you compare public and private hospitals, the contrast is stark. A patient in a NSW public hospital is nearly 6 times more likely to complain to the HCCC than a patient in a private hospital. (HCCC Annual Report 2016-17).

Private Healthcare Australia is the peak representative body for Australia's private health insurance industry. PHA represents 20 Australian health funds with a combined membership of 12.9 million Australians, or 96% 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. PHA's CEO Dr Rachel David is available for interview.

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