



# MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

## Tony Abbott MHR

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### **Survey to measure rate of informed financial consent**

A consumer survey has been conducted throughout July to measure patients' awareness of the costs of their privately insured hospital services before they received treatment.

The survey has been sent to 10,000 people who had a recent private hospital admission and submitted a claim to a health insurance fund. The survey is voluntary and confidential.

The November-December 2006 survey showed a 20 per cent drop in the number of people experiencing surprise out-of-pocket expenses compared with the 2004 survey. However, there is still room to do better.

In too many cases, people still have procedures in hospital as private patients without prior informed financial consent. All patients should be fully informed about any out-of-pocket expenses they are likely to incur.

The Commonwealth Government wants doctors and hospitals to obtain informed financial consent, in advance, preferably in writing, from all patients. This is particularly important when patients will face out-of-pocket expenses for their treatments.

The Government has provided additional funding of more than \$270,000 for the Australian Medical Association (AMA) to carry out activities targeted at medical specialists with limited patient contact. This will build on the AMA education campaign called 'Let's talk about fees', launched in May 2006 and funded by the Government, which encourages doctors to obtain informed financial consent from their patients.

The Government will continue to work with doctors, health insurance funds, hospitals and patients to improve rates of informed financial consent.

Results of the July 2007 survey will be available later this year. This survey will provide information to help the Government consider options to improve the rate of informed financial consent.

**For more information call Mr Abbott's office on ph 02 6277 7220.**