



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

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Private health improvements

Changes to private health insurance expand the range of medical treatments that can be covered, improve Lifetime Health Cover arrangements and make it easier to compare products offered by health funds. A new ad campaign promoting these changes starts today.

The Howard Government has worked hard to make a good health system better. As the population ages and demands on the health system increase, a strong private sector is needed to complement the public health system. This is why the Government has supported private health insurance through rebates now costing \$3.2 billion a year.

Changes to the private health insurance legislation, which took effect on 1 April, create a clearer, flexible and more transparent private health system. Health funds can expand hospital policies to cover treatments outside hospital, such as home dialysis or chemotherapy in doctors' rooms, which substitute for or prevent hospitalisation. They are also able to cover programs to prevent problems such as heart disease or to manage obesity.

The Private Health Insurance Ombudsman has created a new website to help people find information about private cover, including summary information about available products from every fund (www.privatehealth.gov.au). A search engine allows people to find and compare products, including their price.

This summary information, called a Standard Information Statement, means that for the first time key features of every policy will be available in a comparable format. This should help people to understand their own policies and to compare them with others that might better suit their needs.

Thousands of uninsured under-31s and new migrants will be alerted by personal letter to their forthcoming Lifetime Health Cover deadlines. Under Lifetime Health Cover, the earlier people take out insurance, the lower premiums they pay. If they maintain their cover continuously for ten years, people will no longer pay higher premiums even if they first joined after age 30.

Television advertisements explaining the changes will begin tonight. They will be supported by print, internet and radio advertising.

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