



# Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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## MEDIA RELEASE

19 October 2019

### **Private health insurance reform needs a non-partisan solution**

The Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA) today called on all political parties to work together to find solutions to the current private health insurance crisis and to develop a joint approach to the future funding of private health care in Australia.

*AHCRA is an alliance of organisations and individuals interested in working together for a better and fairer health system for Australia's future.*

“It is clear that there are fundamental problems with the role of private health insurance (PHI) within the Australian health system and that these problems are unable to be solved through making minor changes to the current system,” AHCRA Chair, Jennifer Doggett said today.

“AHCRA is concerned to hear consumers’ reports of the problems they experience when using private health insurance, such as unexpected out-of-pocket costs, difficulties in obtaining clear assessments of fees and a lack of information about their options.

“Recent programs focussing on PHI, such as SBS’s Insight and ABC’s The Drum, reveal that many consumers are dissatisfied with PHI but feel pressured to take it out because they fear that the public system will not be able to meet their needs. There is clearly a need for a much more transparent and accountable system which supports consumers to make informed choices about their care.

“It is particularly concerning that consumers are reporting that they are not given accurate information about the options available to them in the public health system. It is unacceptable that consumers are going into debt or spending money they cannot afford on health services which they could access in the public system for free.

“AHCRA believes that the problems with PHI are due to fundamental health system issues and cannot be solved without major reforms. These should involve consultation with all stakeholders, in particular consumers, and will take time to develop and implement.

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“Due to the long-term timeframe for these reforms and the importance of our health system to the community, AHCRA believes that a reform agenda should be developed collaboratively by all three major political parties and be guided by an independent review.

“The changes required will outlast the current government and have an impact on all Australians for many years. We believe that the future of our health system should be above party politics and therefore we are calling on the Coalition Government to invite Labor and the Greens to collaborate with them to develop an agreed reform agenda for our health system.

“We are concerned that if a partisan approach is taken to health system reform it will be difficult to develop a sustainable long term reform agenda, due to our short political cycle and frequent changes of government.

“Therefore, we are calling on the Coalition to put aside its party politics and work with its parliamentary colleagues to develop a joint approach to the future of PHI and private health care within the Australian health system,” Ms Doggett said.

**Further information and comment:** Jennifer Doggett 0403 325 980