



Inquiry into Health Funding - Public Hearing

Parliament House, Canberra – 21 September 2005

The private health sector is the focus of tomorrow's (21 September) public hearings by House of Representatives Health and Ageing Committee at Parliament House, Canberra. Private health care is a key part of this federal inquiry into health funding.

One of the Committee's terms of reference is, "how best to ensure that a strong private health sector can be sustained in the future, based on positive relationships between private health funds, private and public hospitals, medical practitioners, other health professionals and agencies in the various levels of government".

The Committee Chairman, the Hon Alex Somlyay, said, "the public hearing will give the private health insurance industry, consumer groups and the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman an opportunity to discuss with the Committee the key issues affecting consumers in the private sector".

"Members of Parliament are acutely conscious of the pressures on the health system as we all receive a steady stream of people into our electorate offices with complaints – often about private health insurance premiums, gap payments and waiting lists. We too have a vested interest in improving the system," Mr Somlyay said.

The Council of Australian Government's (COAG) meeting on 3 June 2005 agreed that senior officials would consider ways to improve Australia's health care system.

"The Committee's inquiry should be seen as separate - but complementary - to the COAG process. Our inquiry will give organisations and individuals outside government an opportunity to express their views in a public process," Mr Somlyay said.

Venue: Committee Room 1R4, Parliament House, Canberra

The program for **Wednesday 21 September** is as follows:

- 9.30am Private Health Insurance Ombudsman;
- 10.45am Consumers' Health Forum of Australia;
- 11.30am Private Health Insurance Administration Council;
- 1.00pm Strategic Planning Groups for Private Psychiatric Services and National Network of Private Psychiatric Sector Consumers;
- 2.00pm Australian Health Insurance Association;
- 3.00pm Australian Council of Social Service.

For media interview with the Chairman:

Please contact the Committee Secretary on 02 6277 4579 or 0421 051 837.

For a copy of the terms of reference and further information on making a submission:

Contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4145 or email haa.reps@aph.gov.au or visit the website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/healthfunding/index.htm>