

Summary of the first meeting of the Private Health Ministerial Advisory Committee – Information Provision for Consumers Working Group, 28 February 2017

Attendees

<i>Members</i>	
Susan Parker, Chair	Diane Pavlicevic, GMHBA
Jenny Williams, HCF	Rebecca Lush, HAMBS
Ayela Thilo, Bupa	Michael Siwes, iSelect
Jo Root, Consumers Health Forum	Matt Levey, CHOICE
David Salisbury, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	Dr Robert Herkes, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
Lucy Cheetham, Australian Private Hospitals Association	Anita Mulrooney, hirmaa Marketing Committee
Michelle Jakubauskas, Australian Securities and Investments Commission	Ron Wilson, Private Health Insurance Code of Conduct Compliance Committee
David McGregor, Private Health Insurance Ombudsman	Christopher Zinn, Private Health Insurance Intermediaries Association
<i>Other attendees</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Dr Jeffrey Harmer AO, Chair, Private Health Insurance Ministerial Advisory Committee	Susan Azmi
Jessica Howe, Department of Health, observer	Anna Smith
	Peta McElgunn

Apologies

Mr Ian Yates AM, COTA; Ms Jodette Kotz, Australian Medical Association; and Mr Tim Andri, Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

1. Welcome and opening statement

- The Chair delivered her opening statement, reminding members that the purpose of the Working Group is to provide advice to the Private Health Ministerial Advisory Committee (PHMAC) on possible options to reform information provision arrangements for consumers.
- The Chair also noted that the Working Group will meet twice more in March and will provide advice to PHMAC on the deliberations of the Working Group and its views on reform proposals.

2. Introductions

- The Chair provided members an opportunity to introduce themselves.

3. Opening statement – Chair of PHMAC

- The Chair of PHMAC gave the Working Group an overview of the work PHMAC is currently undertaking in other areas of private health reform.
- The Chair of PHMAC reinforced the Minister for Health’s commitment to private health insurance reform, with a particular focus on improving value for consumers.
- The Chair noted that if there are options that industry can undertake to address issues in the system, these should be pursued ahead of regulatory responses.

4. Conflict of interest

- The Chair noted that the Department had considered members' declarations of their interests and did not consider there were any declared conflicts that would prevent participation in the Working Group.

5. Issues paper overview and presentation

- The Secretariat provided a presentation outlining the main issues on information provision for consumers. The presentation provided an overview of current requirements for information provision for consumers, issues with the current arrangements, a framework for considering options and potential reform options.

6. Work plan

- The work plan was agreed by the Working Group with the addition of the issues of provision of preferred provider information, improving privatehealth.gov.au as a comparator website and broader information activities around private health insurance.

7. Presentation by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission

- Michelle Jakubauskas, Senior Researcher, Strategic Intelligence at the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) delivered a presentation on ASIC's role in regulating information provision in the financial services sector and consumer behaviour relating to information provision.
- The Working Group discussed the need to make information understandable for consumers and meet Australian consumer law disclosure obligations.

8. Current regulatory requirements – Standard Information Statements (SIS)

- The Working Group discussed the merits and flaws of current regulatory requirements relating to SISs.
- The issue of whether and how consumers use the SIS was discussed. There was general agreement that the SIS in its current format needed a 'refresh'. The importance of keeping a SIS-like product for consumer advocacy and protection was raised by some members.

9. Options relating to the SIS

- Members' views on the value of maintaining the SIS were mixed. There was significant discussion about using the data provided in the SIS in other formats that could be tailored to suit consumers' individual needs.
- The value of introducing a unique product identifier code was discussed. Views were mixed, with some members seeing the benefits of a unique code for use across multiple platforms while others questioned its value and whether a code was consumer friendly.
- Members raised the need for research to inform development of consumer information resources.
- More generally, there was discussion about the merits of annual Lifetime Health Cover and Private Health Insurance Statements, potential changes to the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman's privatehealth.gov.au website, and electronic versus hard copy dissemination of information. These issues will be discussed further at the next meeting.

10. Agree actions and next meeting dates

- Action items were agreed by the Working Group.
- The Working Group's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 21 March 2017.