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## Victorian public hospital review welcomed

The review of private practice arrangements in Victoria's public hospitals has been welcomed by Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Mr Michael Roff.

The move by the Victorian Health Minister to appoint Professor David Watters to look into the findings of the Victorian Auditor-General's report: *Managing Private Medical Practice In Public Hospitals*, is heartening, Mr Roff said.

"It's particularly good to read that Professor Watters will be reviewing hospital practices to ensure they are clinically appropriate and adhere to the principle of access based on clinical need.

"This has long been an issue in Australia's public hospitals and it is well past time a firm hand was taken with the public system to ensure that taxpayer funds are used appropriately to deliver the services on which public patients depend," he said.

Mr Roff said he hoped the review had some teeth to see real change for Victoria's public patients.

"Public hospitals see dollar signs walking in the door when a privately insured patient walks in. They bend over backwards for them, dropping excesses and out-of-pocket costs, offering private rooms and promising faster access to treatment.

"The result is that one in eight publicly funded beds that should be allocated on the basis of clinical need alone are being given over to the treatment of private patients while public patients are forced to wait in line," he said.

Mr Roff said he was glad the Department of Health and Human Services had accepted the recommendations of the Auditor-General's report, but the issue needed better oversight.

"All States and Territories should follow Victoria's example and really examine this issue with a view to acting on it. Not just because it is required under the National Health Reform Agreement, but also to help those Australians left languishing on elective surgery waiting lists.

"The fact is the median wait time for elective surgery in Victorian public hospitals is 30 days but private patients in public hospitals get surgery in a median of just 19 days.

"This is not how the public system is supposed to work and it must change," Mr Roff said.

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Report: <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/managing-private-medical-practice-public-hospital>

The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) is the peak industry body representing the private hospital and day surgery sector. The private hospital sector treats 3.69 million patients a year, including treatment of more than a third of chemotherapy, 60 percent of all surgery, 74 percent of all elective musculoskeletal surgery and 79 percent of rehabilitation.