



Wednesday 11 December 2019

Public hospital 'cash grab' to blame for waiting list blow out

The cash grab by public hospitals is to blame for the blow out in public elective surgery waiting lists, says Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Michael Roff.

“Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data released today confirms Australian public hospital waiting lists are blowing out. They have made a rod for their own backs when it comes to waiting list disasters. They are actively coercing privately insured patients to use their insurance in the public hospital system and then pushing them ahead in the elective surgery queue, leaving Australians who rely on the public system to wait even longer.

“This goes against the principles of Medicare, which was intended to ensure Australians get access to public hospital, based on clinical need and not their ability to pay.”

Today’s AIHW data tells a sorry tale about the likelihood of accessing health care in a timely manner through public hospitals.

Almost a million patients were added to public hospital elective surgery waiting lists (890,000) in 2018-19, a 2.2 percent increase on the previous year, while only 760,000 were admitted for their surgery in that period.

The data also show that half of all patients were admitted for elective surgery within 41 days of being added to the waiting list, an increase from 40 days the previous year and 35 days in 2014-15.

The recent AIHW report ‘Admitted patient care 2017–18: Australian hospital statistics’ shows public patients wait twice as long overall for elective surgery – a median of 44 days for public patients and 22 for the privately insured.

The new data should come as no surprise to anyone.

“This issue was raised by the Auditor General in Victoria who found the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services incentivised public hospitals to coerce patients into private treatment. In March, the Queensland Government provided \$3 million in emergency funding to buy services from private hospitals following a waiting list blow out.

“If public hospitals prioritised access for public patients that need their care instead of chasing money for bean counters, the public system would run the way it should.

“Public hospitals chasing private patient revenue has not only led to a waiting list blow out, it costs health funds \$1.5 billion each year. Ending this practice would result in a six percent reduction in premiums and free up thousands of public hospital beds to treat public waiting list patients. The result would be significant benefits for public and private patients,” Mr Roff said.

-ENDS-

Media contact: Frith Rayner, Director Communications and Marketing, 0413 971 999



Australian
Private Hospitals
Association



The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) is the peak industry body representing the private hospital and day surgery sector. The private hospital sector treats 4.5 million patients a year, including treatment of a third of chemotherapy, 60 percent of all surgery, 74 percent of all elective musculoskeletal surgery and 80 percent of rehabilitation.