



MEDIA RELEASE

New England residents to benefit from major private health insurance reforms

13 Oct 2017

The Turnbull/Joyce Government has announced a wide ranging package of reforms to make private health insurance simpler and more affordable, particularly in regional centres like the New England.

Deputy Prime Minister and Member for New England, Barnaby Joyce, said that every dollar matters to families in the New England and these reforms will get better value for families and make policies easier to understand.

“Private health insurance is an essential and valuable part of the Australia’s health system,” Mr Joyce said.

“To support Australians in regional and rural areas, insurers will be able to offer travel and accommodation benefits for people in regional and rural areas that need to travel for treatment. This is of significant benefit to people in New England.

“We are encouraging younger Australians to take up private health insurance by allowing insurers to discount hospital insurance premiums for 18 to 29 year olds by up to 10 per cent. The discount will phase out after people turn 40.

“People with hospital insurance that does not offer full cover for mental health treatment will be able to upgrade their cover and access mental health services without a waiting period on a once-off basis. This will significantly enhance the value of private health insurance for young people.

“We know that many people would like to be able to select a higher excess in exchange for lower premiums.

“That’s why we will increase the maximum excess consumers can choose under their health insurance policies for the first time since 2001. This will allow many consumers to reduce their premium increase in 2019.”

Health Minister Greg Hunt said that many Australians currently find private health insurance confusing and their level of cover hard to understand.

“We will act to simplify private health insurance by requiring insurers to categorise products as

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Hon **Barnaby Joyce** MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

gold/silver/bronze/basic, and use standardised definitions for treatments to make it clear what is and isn't covered in their policies." Minister Hunt said.

"The privatehealth.gov.au website will be upgraded to make it easier to compare insurance products, and insurers will be able to provide personalised information to consumers on their product every year.

"We're also boosting the powers of the Private Health Insurance Ombudsman and increasing its resources to ensure consumer complaints are resolved clearly and quickly.

Mr Joyce said the Coalition is committed to private health insurance and committed to supporting the more than 13 million Australians that have taken out cover.

"We are investing around \$6 billion every year in the private health insurance rebate to help keep premiums affordable for families in the New England," he said.

By contrast, Labor hates private health insurance and has already confirmed that they will cut the rebate. This will hurt millions of Australian families.

In Government, Labor cut \$4 billion from the private health insurance rebate and means tested it. And now they've confirmed they want to do it again.

The Turnbull/Joyce Government is committed to improving private health insurance into the future, and our reform work will continue.

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