



Press Release

21 April 2020

Good news for patients as elective surgery to resume

Private Healthcare Australia says the decision by the National Cabinet to resume elective (essential non-emergency) surgery is good news for Australians who are living in pain and discomfort.

The reintroduction of elective surgeries from next week will be staged, determined by clinicians and include:

- procedures representing low risk, high value care as determined by specialist societies
- selection of patients who are at low risk of post-operative deterioration
- children whose procedures have exceeded clinical wait times
- assisted reproduction; endoscopic procedures; screening programs; and critical dental procedures.

“Many patients who have spent the last month living in distress and uncertainty as a result of the temporary restrictions on elective surgery will now have clarity on when their surgery will take place,” PHA Chief Executive Dr Rachel David said today.

“Consumers can be assured that health funds will work closely with private hospitals and surgeons to safely and efficiently clear the backlog of elective procedures. Health fund members will have access to timely surgery, their doctor of choice and continuity of care.

“Australia’s management of the COVID-19 pandemic had been effective in flattening the curve, enabling the staged resumption of elective surgery earlier than anticipated. This decision will help manage short term pressures on the health system, secure the jobs of essential health workers in the private sector and reduce the post pandemic wave of pent up demand for surgery which may yet eventuate.

The National Cabinet will monitor and review this decision at two and four week intervals, taking into consideration the number of COVID-19 cases, PPE use and availability, and health system capacity.

Dr David urged members under financial stress to speak with their health fund before considering whether to downgrade or drop their cover.

“Australia’s health funds are doing everything possible to ease financial pressure on their members and continue to provide essential health services. Health funds are going to extreme lengths to support members, covering mental health services in and out of hospital, and allied health services including critical dental care, and funding vital telehealth services for psychology and physiotherapy.

“This is an extremely uncertain and stressful time for all Australians. Health funds and the private sector health workforce have an important role to play in the very difficult and uncertain time ahead.”

Private Healthcare Australia is the peak representative body for Australia’s private health insurance industry. PHA represents 24 Australian health funds with a combined membership of over 13 million Australians, or 97% of the sector on membership.

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