

Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Inc. ABN 29 454 001 424

Insurer wish lists dressed up with good cheer...it's starting to look a lot like Christmas managed care

Wednesday 9 December 2015

The Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) is warning the Federal Government to tread carefully when considering changes to the private health insurance industry as it fears granting insurers increased powers will herald the arrival of managed care in Australia.

Big name insurers such as Medibank and Bupa have already shown their intent to strip premiums of important cover whilst dumping day-to-day costs on the shoulders of private hospitals, now they are hoping the Government will offer them a free ride industry reform.

This week Medibank has been promoting its submission to the Private Health Insurance Review; a seven point blue-print of changes the ASO says will open the door to managed care.

“Dressed up as cost-savers, nearly all of Medibank’s proposed changes are about moving choice and control away from the consumer and straight to the insurer,” ASO President Dr Michael Steiner said.

“Australians aren’t very familiar with the term ‘managed care’ because we are lucky enough to have a health system that honours choice and quality over simple cost-containment,” Dr Steiner said.

Managed care, in simple terms, is corporate healthcare that is focused on keeping costs down.

“What systems of managed care end up sacrificing, and we have seen this played out dramatically in the US, is quality and choice for patients (or consumers).

“We are already seeing managed care impacts with health insurers obstructing patient access to their cover for sight restoring MBS item numbers”.

“Patients are the losers in a managed care scenario,” he said.

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The ASO believes the heroes of healthcare in Australia are high quality services and accessibility.

“These are features of our health system we must fight to protect on behalf of our patients,” Dr Steiner said.

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