

MEDIA RELEASE

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Private Health Insurance Amendment (GP Services) Bill 2014

Sydney, 20 August 2014 - HCF Managing Director, Shaun Larkin, presented at a public hearing in Sydney today before the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee which is conducting an inquiry into the Private Health Insurance Amendment (GP Services) Bill 2014.

A copy of the opening statement made on the day by Mr. Larkin is attached.

HCF is the largest non-profit private health insurer registered under the Private Health Insurance Act.

However, we do more than just provide health insurance, we also care for our members' through an innovative range of health management programs and services. To use the words of the AMA in their submission to the Committee these programs and services are focussed on improving the coordination of patient care, ensuring patient care is provided in the most appropriate clinical setting, and avoiding unnecessary hospital admissions.

I would like to highlight just three of these programs and services to the Committee.

My Health Guardian was launched in 2009 as a \$100 million investment and provides phone-based support from registered nurses to approximately 25,000 HCF members suffering from chronic conditions such as diabetes.

It also provides all of HCF's 1.6 million members with access to a web-based customised health record, health risk assessments and personalised health coaching.

It is the longest-running and largest program of its type in Australia.

Member satisfaction and health outcomes for the program have been positive including a 46% improvement in medication management by participants and significant improvement in lifestyle risk factors such as:

- lower smoking rates;
- increased physical activity; and
- statistically significant decreases in body mass index (BMI) for both obese and overweight participants

A three-year peer-reviewed study of My Health Guardian published in April 2013 in the journal Population Health Management found that the program significantly reduced the rate of hospital admissions and average length of stay for participants with cardiovascular disease and diabetes, which together make up the bulk of chronic illness in Australia today.

Lastly, a key measure we use to monitor the performance of the service provided for us by Healthways is the level of self-reported GP visits by participants because we consider these an essential component of an effective population health program.

Again, to paraphrase the AMA, we believe this reflects a program that is well-designed and well-targeted.

My Home Doctor was introduced in May, 2012 and provides eligible HCF members the opportunity to access an after-hours GP medical service at their home.

Linking to an existing service, HCF's involvement enabled the service provider to expand and grow this service to an ever increasing number of Australians, not just HCF members.

More than 25,000 HCF members have accessed this service since inception.

The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and HCF have an ongoing partnership focused on heart disease.

'Victor Chang' operates mobile booths on a rotating basis at each of HCF's 55 branches across Australia. Staffed by registered nurses from 'Victor Chang', the booths offer a 10-minute health check focussed on major risk factors for to heart disease — elevated blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose levels.

Since inception in 2012, more than 14,000 HCF members used the service. Of those tested just over 4,000 members (or 29%) tested were advised to visit their GP for follow-up due to one or more adverse readings.

These are but three of the 20+ programs and services that HCF offers to care for our members' health. HCF has worked hard over the last 15 years to improve members' health through an ever increasing investment in well designed and targeted programs that in many cases feature quite specific mechanisms to actively involve a HCF member's GP.

As such we concur with the Summary in the Department's submission to the Committee:

Any increased regulation which may discourage private health insurers from arranging preventative or intermediary care for their members would not be a desirable outcome.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this statement to the Committee and would be happy to take any questions.

- Ends-

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About HCF

HCF is Australia's largest not-profit health insurer, currently covering more than 1.5 million Australians. To learn more about HCF go to <http://www.hcf.com.au/about-us>.