

HANDS OFF MEDICARE!

We get sick & we vote!

FACT SHEET 3

What has happened to Medicare?

Medicare has been undermined significantly in recent years. Health has become the number one domestic political hot potato. Blame and cost shifting between the federal and state/territory governments is the norm. No one appears prepared to negotiate to solve the health financing and delivery problems that plague our system.

Since the Howard government has come to power there has been a fundamental shift in health policy. The emphasis now is on individual responsibility for meeting health costs rather than a collective responsibility. This is evidenced by:

- **The decline in universal bulk billing**
- **Growth in out of pocket health expenses**
- **Over \$2.3 billion every year is diverted from public health services to the private health insurance rebate:** As private health insurance premiums have increased many have dropped out of private health insurance. The majority of Australians who do not have private health insurance are subsidising a benefit for a minority and a principal stated objective of the rebate—decreasing pressure on the public hospital system—has not been met.
- **Waiting lists for surgical procedures are blowing out:** Patients in both the public and private systems are experiencing delays in accessing timely and appropriate care.
- **More people are delaying needed health care because they cannot afford out of pocket health expenses:** This situation extends beyond medical services to dental care and other health care services such as podiatry, physiotherapy and nursing services.

Given the ageing of the Australian population (and the expected pressure this will put on health expenditure) and the increases in costs of new health treatments and diagnostic procedures it is essential that the Australian community be engaged in a genuine debate about health needs and expectations and how these are best funded.

Australia needs a National Health Reform Council so that all key players (including the community) can be involved in an examination of the problems and formulation of strategies to address these.



Speak out for the good of your health. Tell your friends how much Medicare means to you.



Let your Federal MP know how much you care! Visit www.aph.gov.au to find out your MP's contact details. Write a letter to your local newspaper.



For further information and campaign materials go to the QNU website (<http://www.qnu.org.au>) or contact the QNU on 07 3840 1444.



Join your union or community group to participate in the Hands Off Medicare campaign. To find out which union or community group you can join, visit www.qnu.org.au.



Produced by the Public Hospitals Health and Medicare Alliance of Queensland, c/- Queensland Nurses' Union (QNU) GPO Box 1289 Brisbane Q 4001. *PHHAMAQ* is a coalition of consumers, trade unions, community organisations and health service providers raising community awareness, encouraging debate and campaigning for quality public health services for all Australians. Authorised: G Hawksworth, 56 Boundary St, West End. June 2004.