

## MEDIA STATEMENT

**9 October 2020**

### **Statement regarding Medical Costs Finder website**

The announcement that the Commonwealth Government will spend more than \$17million, during a global pandemic, on a website that the public has already rejected is pretty remarkable.

Many people are now looking at premium rate rises from their private health insurers and they are beginning to question the value for money they are getting. Private health insurance policies offer less and less value at a higher cost each year.

The ASA supports a collaborative approach involving patients, medical specialists, insurers and the private sector to ensure the development of a practical robust and sustainable funding model for health care. Healthcare should be about patients, not shareholders. The billions of dollars in profit the private health insurers are raking in each year are a slap in the face to patients who struggle to keep up with the inconsistencies between health insurance policies and healthcare providers.

For too long doctors, such as surgeons and anaesthetists, have been incorrectly blamed for rising out-of-pocket costs for patients. Medicare and health fund rebates for medical services including anaesthesia in Australia are well below the true value of the service provided and we are in fact one of the safest countries in the world for anaesthesia.

Rebates have failed to keep pace for almost 30 years and were frozen from 2012 to July last year. This is something fundamental that needs to be addressed by the Government, rather than spending millions of dollars for a website to document just how out of touch they are. Despite recent indexation of Commonwealth, tax funded MBS rebates, some insurers have not passed that on, and some have even reduced their rebates. This further increases profit margins for some private health insurers after a time of very low activity due to COVID-19.

***The above statement can be attributed to Dr Suzi Nou, ASA President.***

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*The ASA, with more than 3,700 members, is the peak body and leading representative of anaesthetists in Australia. Since 1934 the ASA has been supporting, representing and educating anaesthetists to ensure the safest high-quality patient care.*