HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT BILL 1978

Date Introduced: 6 June 1978
House: House of Representatives
Presented by: Hon. R.J.D. Hunt, M.P., Minister for Health

Purpose

The Bill proposes to amend the Health Insurance Act 1973 to give effect to changes to the health scheme which were announced on 24 May 1978 relating to levels of medical benefits and the abolition of bulk billing except for certain eligible people. Other provisions concern change to the health insurance system and financing of hospitals in the A.C.T.

Provisions

Proposed s3 and proposed s5A provide for overseas persons temporarily resident in Australia or Australians temporarily resident overseas to be exempted from being subject to either the health insurance levy or contributions to an Australian private health insurance fund if the Minister for Health is satisfied that each such person has adequate and appropriate health insurance with overseas insurance providers. Any exemption of this type will be for a specified period and will be regularly reviewed.

Proposed s10 of the Act reduces from 85% to 75% the medical benefits refund payable in respect of the scheduled list of medical services and fees, and increases the maximum patient contribution from $5 per service to $10 per service. Provision is made to retain the 85% and $5 limits for eligible pensioners and their dependants and to vary these by regulation but not beyond the 75% and $10 limits prescribed in this proposed section.

Proposed s19(5) prohibits, unless the Minister for Health otherwise directs, payment of medical benefits for medical screening services which are not reasonably required for the medical management of the patient.

Proposed s20 abolishes bulk billing for medical services except in the case of services provided to eligible pensioners and their
dependants.

Under s21 of the Act medical benefits are payable in respect of medical services received by Australian residents when overseas if the provider of the services is authorised to practice medicine in the country concerned. Proposed s21 of the Act will enable the Minister to declare a provider to be not acceptable for the purpose of paying medical benefits if the Minister finds his training or facilities or some other matter is unacceptable.

Proposed s32 provides for Capital Territory hospitals to be eligible for similar cost sharing arrangements as currently prevail between the Commonwealth and the States.

21 July

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New provisions also extend the categories of orphan children who are entitled to be benefits under the scheme, (Clause 12).

Finally, the Bill includes a new provision which reduces by half (from 11½ pc to 5·7¼ pc) the percentage contribution payable by any Senator or member after completion of 18 years of Parliamentary service (Clause 6).

26 July 1978

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