

**Date:** 11 December 1998

**Subject:** Rebate decision sparks flood of enquiries

NIB Health Funds has fielded a flood of enquiries today in the wake of last night's Senate vote to introduce a 30% rebate for all health fund members.

NIB's Managing Director, Mr Colin Rogers, said the fund's Call Centre had been inundated with enquiries about private health cover. Almost 70% of these callers were opting to join the fund.

A number of existing members had also contacted NIB about upgrading their present level of cover.

Mr Rogers said the level of enquiries and new memberships were a strong indication that the Federal Government's initiative could achieve its aim of increasing the number of people with private health cover.

"This legislation acknowledges the value of a robust private sector in Australia's health system by providing reward for those who have chosen to take responsibility for their own health care by maintaining private health cover," Mr Rogers said.

"The rebate will encourage more people to consider private health insurance, and enable many more to continue with their existing cover or to consider upgrading.

"NIB would certainly anticipate an expanded market in the next year from the introduction of the rebate."

Mr Rogers said NIB also supported changes to the bill which will address the issue of 'gap' payments.

"Out-of-pocket expenses have consistently been identified as one of the biggest disincentives to health fund membership," Mr Rogers said.

"We have been working with the Australian Health Insurance Association and Federal Government on these issues. This legislation now puts these initiatives into a much-tighter time frame.

"When all these issues are taken into account, we are confident that the legislation can provide the platform needed for the Australian health system to successfully meet the challenges presented by advances in medical technology and Australia's changing demographics."

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