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Subject nib urges Australians to keep heart healthy during National Heart Week

With National Heart Week approaching nib health funds (nib) is encouraging its customers to take preventative steps to maintain a heart healthy.

nib offers a range of preventative health benefits and programs for customers including 'Healthier Lifestyle' extras benefits on selected products of up to \$250 for weight management, quit smoking, first aid courses, preventative health tests and other health management programs.

nib Chief Executive Officer, Mark Fitzgibbon said the health fund has also introduced the COACH Program, a risk reduction, phone counselling service for people who have recently experienced a cardiac episode such as a heart attack.

"In the past year, 483 people have successfully completed our COACH program, many of who have implemented significant life changes that will reduce the risk of future episodes," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"Around 80% of participants have reduced their blood pressure to be within National Heart Foundation guidelines, while 79% have reduced their cholesterol levels to within a satisfactory range," Mr Fitzgibbon added.

According to the National Heart Foundation, cardiovascular disease is one of Australia's largest health problems, and despite improvements over the last few decades, it remains one of the biggest burdens on our economy.

"In Financial Year 2009, nib paid out more than \$40.6 million in claims to 4,254 customers for heart-related episodes. This represents the second highest major disease category benefit claimed by nib customers behind musculoskeletal system disorders such as knee and hip replacements," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"In 2008, cardiovascular disease claimed the lives of more than 48,000 Australians – deaths that are largely preventable.

"National Heart Week provides an ideal reminder for all Australians to assess their lifestyle options and have a check-up with their doctor."

For more information about nib's health and wellbeing initiatives, call 13 14 63 or visit www.nib.com.au

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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