

## ***Controversial health insurer Bupa a contentious choice for diggers care: ASO***

***Thursday 29 November 2018***

Responding to reports that controversial health insurer Bupa will likely win the tender to supply all health services to the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists has described the result as “eyebrow raising”.

ASO President Dr Peter Sumich said there was strong feeling within the medical community that healthcare for our diggers should not be insurer-led.

“The problems with incumbent provider Medibank Health Solutions were real. Service provision was clunky and disjointed due to contract disputes and restrictive referral arrangements,” Dr Sumich said.

Media continues to report that Australians with private health insurance cover are being provided with less while being asked to pay more (“We’re paying \$834 million more for health insurance but getting less’, The Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday 27 November 2018).

“Bupa is a profit driven multi-national who will also have their eyes on the bottom-line,” Dr Sumich said.

“Our diggers — like all patients — deserve medical care that is doctor-led and therefore responsive to individual health need rather than finance-driven.”

The ASO added that Bupa, which has been shrouded by controversy in recent months, has lost the confidence of surgeons, hospital operators, and the many private health insurance consumers who have cancelled their Bupa premiums.

“Bupa’s introduction of exclusions and new restrictions has lost them thousands of policy holders,” Dr Sumich said.

“Their aggressive asymmetrical contract disputes are pushing day surgeries and hospitals to financial breaking point and many day surgeries have walked away from negotiations in disgust,” he said.

“When it comes to healthcare, consumers want full choice of doctor and hospital — they don’t want to be told they can only go to this hospital and they can only see that doctor.

“In maintaining the health of our defence force personnel it is critical that the medical treatment and hospital care they receive is the very best that can be provided.”

According to the ASO, it is difficult to understand why the Secretary of Defence has not sought references from the medical community who are dealing with Bupa problems every day.

“I would be interested to know what process was followed in awarding this contract,” Dr Sumich said.

**ENDS.** Sarah Todman, Australian Society of Ophthalmologists media. Mob:0425 883 304