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Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Inc. ABN 29 454 001 424

**Friday 8 June 2018**

## **ASO advises Bupa customers to consider their options before 1 September deadline**

Dramatic policy changes deemed by the Commonwealth Ombudsman to have been ‘poorly communicated’ have left Bupa customers with no choice but to consider their private health insurance options, the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists warned today.

The warning comes following yesterday’s release of The Commonwealth Ombudsman’s report into Bupa’s planned hospital policy changes, which are set to take effect on 1 September.

The report outlines “detrimental impacts” on consumers and takes the insurance giant to task over the “appropriateness of communications provided to policyholders”.

ASO President Dr Peter Sumich said Bupa had so far failed in its duty to communicate clearly with its customers.

“I have been left confused by Bupa’s recent policy announcements and re-announcements. What hope does the average consumer have to figure this mess out? It breeds distrust and public anger with the private medical system,” Dr Sumich said.

“It seems that BUPA is playing a game of ‘cat and mouse’ with health consumers and providers,” he said.

As a result of the changes, more than 700,000 Bupa customers who hold minimum benefit policies will lose significant benefits after 1 September. The lost benefits would appear to significantly disadvantage older policy holders.

Meanwhile, 1.4 million Bupa customers will have new restrictions placed on their choice of hospital (and as a consequence their choice of doctor).

“The unfortunate punchline here is: Over a million Bupa customers now have a pressing deadline (1 Sept) to figure out what these changes mean in the real world and either upgrade their policy coverage with BUPA or switch to another health insurer who can give them the full range of choices,” Dr Sumich said.

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Gap cover to emergency patients in public facilities is to be reinstated which is a small victory but only a partial concession.

**Ends.**

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