

Brief submission

Letting private providers into Medicare will see for-profit companies making critical decisions about who gets treated and how. This would lead to a two-tiered system where those with the financial means receive preferential treatment, and those who can't afford the health care will wait or not get the health care they need. This directly contradicts the notion of universal access to quality healthcare which underpins Australia's world-class health system.

Allowing private providers into health opens the door to community inequity. Markets in small regional towns and remote areas, and areas with high levels of poverty, aren't profitable for health insurance companies. So, it may exacerbate the split of general practice between those who cherry-pick the quick and straightforward (and therefore more profitable) patients and those who are left to deal with more complex patients, usually small business GPs and the Aboriginal Health sector.

Profit-driven healthcare threatens the very foundation of our universal Medicare system, restricting access and quality of care, especially in areas where insurers don't stand to make money. We need investment in our public health system, rather than cost-cutting and outsourcing.

In America, people's healthcare is decided by the insurance coverage they have (or don't have). I was treated in an American hospital for a broken neck and injured spinal cord in 2013. I was told that I would not be getting certain services because my insurance did not cover those treatments. Fortunately, I had family to help me out. And when I was able I returned to Australia to access the health care I needed.

Access to health care is right - not a privilege!

Sheri Lochner