

Out of pocket costs dilemma requires action

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New figures showing that Australians are spending more than ever in health costs highlights the need for more Government action to remedy the crippling out of pocket costs many patients face, the Consumers Health Forum says.

Latest official figures show that health spending by individuals has grown by more than 50 per cent in real terms the past decade while growth in Australian Government spending on health is the lowest in years.

“The latest illustration of the impact of high out of pocket hospital costs came with last night’s SBS television *Insight* report, showing yet again that this issue is not going away,” the spokesman for the Consumers Health Forum, Mark Metherell, said.

“The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report into health expenditure released today shows that on average we spent \$1,235 in 2017-18 out of our own pocket on health with big ticket items including over the counter medications, dental care and medical services, with the fastest growing cost category being hospital care.

“One of the big drivers of out of pocket treatment costs is the real or perceived need by many patients to seek private care because of long public hospital delays.

“The financial strains on public hospitals have meant that the majority of Australians who do not have private insurance face long waits for important procedures like cataract surgery and joint replacements.

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Consumers shaping health

“This situation which poses a potential plight for a majority of Australians, must change if we want Australia to maintain a world standard health system,” Mr Metherell said.

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