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MEDIA RELEASE

"Don't Lose Sight of Our Seniors"

Ophthalmologists back National Seniors as over-65s face private health rebate cut

Older Australians are being urged to take notice and be informed of the Labor Government's proposed change to cut private health insurance rebates for over 65s with the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) and National Seniors Australia collaboratively pushing the issue into the spotlight.

The ASO has thrown its support behind National Seniors Australia's Health Costs campaign, with a poster campaign their members will be displaying in clinics, sharing important information on the changes.

Under the proposal, [which is currently in front of the Senate](#), the higher private health insurance rebate currently available to Australians aged 65 and over would be reduced so that the rebate is the same regardless of age, from 1 April 2027 if legislated, with the savings directed to aged care.

The higher rebate was originally introduced to encourage older Australians into private health and ease pressure on the public system.

National Seniors Australia estimates the change could add more than \$1,000 a year to premiums for a couple on Gold cover, and push tens of thousands of seniors to drop or downgrade their insurance.

For ophthalmologists, that's where the concern sharpens. Gold-tier cover is what funds many of the sight-saving procedures, including cataract surgery, that older Australians rely on.

If seniors are priced out of private cover, the ASO warns, they face either higher out-of-pocket costs or long waits for treatment in an already-stretched public system, with their vision hanging in the balance.

"For an older Australian waiting on cataract surgery, private cover can be the difference between having the procedure now and losing months of clear sight in a public queue," said ASO Chief Executive Officer Katrina Ronne.

"Making that cover more expensive for over-65s puts vision and the independence that comes with it directly at risk. We're standing with National Seniors to say don't lose sight of our seniors."

The main worry for ophthalmologists is patients avoiding care in fear of the costs associated.

"Ophthalmologists see every day what happens when eye care is delayed," Ms Ronne said.

"We'd urge every older Australian to check how this change could affect them, and to add their voice to the campaign before any decision is locked in."

National Seniors Australia (NSA) CEO Mr Chris Grice said NSA has heard from many older people, including pensioners and low-income self-funded retirees, who are in angst about how they'll manage increased out-of-pocket expenses on top of increased living costs that continue to squeeze their limited budgets.

"Older Australians have paid premiums for decades, in some cases their whole working lives. Now, when they really need that insurance – when affordability is paramount – it has been swept from under their feet," NSA CEO Chris Grice said.

"NSA believes a more balanced approach is needed. One that protects older Australians, maintains access to timely care, and avoids unintended costs elsewhere in the system.

"We encourage older Australians to support our Health Costs campaign and to help NSA increase our weight and impact. The bigger our numbers, the louder our voice!"

National Seniors Australia has published a Private Health Insurance rebate cut estimator so seniors can see how the proposed change could affect their own premiums and is calling for an independent inquiry into the private health system.

Older Australians can check their potential impact and join the campaign at [Out-Of-Pocket Health Costs - National Seniors Australia](#)



[To access full resolution poster, click here.](#)

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About the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

The Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO) is the peak professional body representing ophthalmologists across Australia. Ophthalmologists are medical doctors who have completed specialist training in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of eye diseases. The ASO advocates for policies that support high-quality eye care and optimal patient outcomes.

About National Seniors Australia

Celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026, National Seniors Australia (NSA) is a peak consumer advocacy body that defends, protects, and promotes the interests of older Australians. Through research, advocacy and engagement, NSA advocates on issues including health and aged care, the Age Pension, retirement income, age discrimination, housing, digital literacy, banking, and cost of living as well as the promotion of the value and contribution of older Australians. Its work is informed by in-house research and the experiences of around 300,000 NSA community members nationwide as well as nearly ten million Australians aged fifty years and older.

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