



# Rebekha Sharkie MP

*Federal Member for Mayo*



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **REBEKHA SHARKIE MP BACKS CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT OLDER AUSTRALIANS' HEALTH INSURANCE REBATE**

Federal Independent Member for Mayo Rebekha Sharkie has joined National Seniors in calling on the Federal Government to reverse its planned cut to the private health insurance rebate for Australians aged 65 and over.

National Seniors representatives have been in Canberra meeting with Ms Sharkie and a range of MPs and Senators to urge Parliament to reject the proposed changes.

Ms Sharkie said she strongly supported National Seniors' campaign and would continue to advocate for older Australians facing higher health and household costs.

"This is a significant hit to older Australians at a time when many are already struggling to make ends meet," Ms Sharkie said.

"Three million older Australians with private health insurance, including more than 400,000 age pensioners, are potentially affected by this change.

"Many older Mayo residents have contacted me to say they simply cannot cut anything else from their household budgets. They are telling me they're being left with the impossible choice of cutting back on essentials or giving up their health insurance.

"That's an appalling choice to have to make."

Ms Sharkie said the Government needed to recognise that older Australians have different healthcare needs and that many had maintained private health insurance over decades.

"For many Australians, private health insurance is not a luxury. It is something they have sustained throughout their working lives so they can have greater certainty about accessing healthcare as they get older.

"Taking away the additional rebate at the time healthcare needs are increasing, risks forcing people out of private health insurance or to downgrade their cover."



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National Seniors has warned the change could result in significant increases in premiums for older policyholders.

Ms Sharkie said the impact could be particularly concerning in regional Australia.

“Regional Australians already face challenges accessing healthcare, with fewer specialists and hospital services available in many communities.

“We shouldn’t be making it harder for older regional Australians to maintain private cover.

“If people drop their insurance because they can no longer afford it, that will also increase pressure on our already stretched public hospital system.”

Ms Sharkie said she would continue pressing the Government to reconsider the policy.

“The Government needs to listen to older Australians who are saying they cannot afford another increase in their household costs.

“Three million older Australians should not be treated as an easy target for budget savings.

“Why is the Government treating older Australians so badly?”

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