

Dublin, Monday 19 June 2006

Health Insurance Authority Launches Consumer Information Campaign

Almost 40% of policyholders are unaware of switching rights

The Health Insurance Authority (HIA) today has launched a new consumer information campaign to inform people of their rights in relation to the health insurance market. In particular, the campaign will focus on consumers' rights when it comes to switching health insurance provider and comes as part of the HIA's ongoing work of providing information on health insurance to consumers. It is being launched in the context of research, commissioned by the HIA, showing that each year only about 1% of consumers switch health insurance provider and that almost 40% of policyholders are unaware that they would not have to serve additional waiting periods if they chose to switch to a similar product with another health insurer.

Building on their last campaign, which aimed to assist consumers in understanding and comparing health insurance products – this campaign will inform people who hold private health insurance of their right to switch insurer and the relative ease with which they can do this. The campaign will include a series of advertisements in national newspapers commencing in the coming days. The adverts, which will largely feature on the TV listings pages in the print media, make the connection that the consumer is in control of both their television viewing and their health insurance provider. The adverts will direct people to the HIA website where further information on their health insurance rights will be published.

Information to be published on the HIA website will provide consumers with greater access to information in relation to their rights and options as health insurance consumers, including specific information in relation to switching insurer, for those who wish to do so. It is hoped that informing consumers of their rights and options will assist the freer operation of a competitive health insurance market.

Speaking following the announcement of the campaign, HIA Chief Executive Liam Sloyan noted; “The focus of the HIA’s information campaigns is to provide people with information in relation to their rights and options so that they can maximise the control they have as consumers. It is also important for people to know that their rights in Irish law regarding health insurance apply to consumers of all ages and health status”.

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Notes to Editor:

The Health Insurance Authority ("the Authority") was established on 1st February, 2001 in accordance with the terms of the Health Insurance Act, 1994 by Mr Micheál Martin T.D, Minister for Health and Children. The Authority is a regulatory body for private health insurance in Ireland. The Authority is to be independent in the exercise of its functions and is required to make a report of its activities to the Minister for Health and Children who will lay the report before each House of the Oireachtas.