



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle



2 March 2005

MEDIA RELEASE

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS RISE: ANOTHER SQUEEZE ON AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES

The announcement that private health insurance premiums would increase an average of almost 8% is another burden on the household budgets of Australian families, Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, said today.

The latest figures show that over 60,000 Novocastrians are covered by private health insurance, and the 2005 premium hike is on top of the 7.58% increase last year and the 7.4% increase in 2003.

"The Howard Government is pushing people into private health insurance by running down Medicare and bulk-billing, yet it has no idea how to keep the costs of private health insurance manageable for Australian families," Ms Grierson said.

"With private health insurance increasingly unaffordable, and public health services increasingly inaccessible, families are facing a real dilemma in finding healthcare. This Government has never been able to find the right balance between public and private healthcare, and our families continue to pay the price," Ms Grierson said.

"When this premium increase is added to the average \$40 per month contributed to the household debt burden by this morning's interest rates hike, the full extent of the Howard Government's fiscal irresponsibility and policy complacency becomes clear," Ms Grierson concluded.

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