



27 January 2010

## **RECORD NUMBER OF MEMBERS RUSH TO JOIN HIF**

---

The Health Insurance Fund of Western Australia, HIF, has capped off a successful end to 2009, with a record number of new members joining the not-for-profit health fund. Recently released figures reveal that in November 2009 the number of members joining HIF increased by 394% compared to the November 2008 figure and was up by 179% in December 2009 compared to December 2008.

“These increased membership numbers prove that what we are doing at HIF is right for WA consumers. This time last year, due to the global financial crisis, HIF membership was growing at a respectable rate of around 3.5% per annum, now we’re growing at three times that rate,” said Managing Director Graeme Gibson.

“I think people are turning to HIF because we are the smart choice when it comes to private health cover. We offer top quality health insurance while making sure it remains affordable.

Mr Gibson said that word of mouth had traditionally been HIF’s best recruitment tool.

“For me what makes our membership figures even more impressive is that in recent months Western Australia’s big health insurer HBF has experienced a marked slow-down in member growth while HIF’s membership has snowballed.

“HBF increased its premiums by almost 8% in April last year on the back of losing around \$200 million in bad investments over the past two financial years. I think that HBF members are bracing for more bad news and will once again be forced to dig deep to pay premium increases,” Mr Gibson added.

Mr Gibson believed that the surge in HIF’s membership in 2009 is a result of people leaving the big health funds because they remain worried about a sharp rise in their health insurance premiums in the coming months.

“A recent article in a national newspaper suggested that funds would be increasing premiums by around 7%. I want to reassure our members and all West Australians that HIF will not be increasing premiums by that much and once again we expect to come in under a number of the big funds and the national average for increases.”

“Because HIF is a not-for-profit health fund, any surpluses we make are returned to members through lower premiums, increased benefits and better customer service.”

As well as keeping its average premium increases below HBF's average and the national average increases for the past three years, HIF has also offered a range of improved benefits to its members in their hospital and ancillary cover.

"HIF is the only WA health fund that offers members the freedom to choose their dentist. Unlike other health funds we don't discriminate amongst our members, HIF applies the same great rebate system no matter which dentist our members choose to see. That's why we are the only health fund to be publicly applauded by the Australian Dental Association (WA) for its stand on contracted dentists," Mr Gibson added.

-ends-

**Media contact:** Helen Andrews – Health Insurance Fund of WA – 08 9227 4229