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# Clearing up NHI confusion

**WORRY:** BILL MISUNDERSTOOD

» People thought they should cancel medical aid to enjoy free health care.

Ina Opperman

**D**espite the promise of universal health coverage for everyone, the signing of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill just before the election brought with it several misconceptions around medical schemes that undermine the foundation of our health care system.

This is according to Dr Katlego Mothudi, managing director at the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF).

He said the rhetoric leading up to the NHI Act caused many people to believe they should cancel their memberships immediately to enjoy free health services.

This even though the NHI would take years to be implemented.

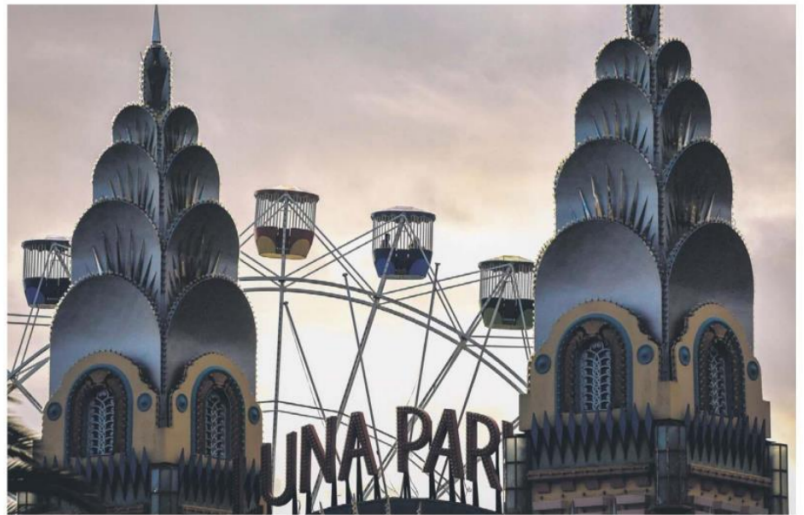
The Act introduces a single-payer system and central to the idea is that health care is a "public good". This suggests that all health care funding should exclude medical schemes and be government-funded.

But Mothudi said health care was more accurately described as a social good.

"A public good is one that the government must provide and from which no-one can be excluded, regardless of payment. While health care is essential, it is not feasible to provide it as a public good," he said.

He said the BHF is concerned about the numerous misconceptions propagated by government representatives since 2009 and commissioned Prof Alex van den Heever of the Wits Health Consortium to investigate these claims.

"Despite their hyperbolic nature and lack of systematic research, these statements carry significant weight due to their endorsement by influential individuals. Prof van den Heever's report identified frequently repeated assertions that he concluded were unsubstantiated and untrue."



## SPINNING WHEEL

Visitors to the heritage-listed Luna Park in Sydney, Australia, yesterday. Picture: AFP

Key findings from the report included that:

- Medical schemes are unsustainable – False;
- Health services are a public

good – False; and

- Most medical scheme beneficiaries are white – False.

While the BHF supports health care reform, it has raised con-

cerns about the Act's constitutionality and calls for a factual review of claims about medical schemes, Mothudi said.  
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