

Why Do I Need Overseas Student Health Cover if I Already Have Travel Insurance?

Hospital treatment in Australia can be expensive. The average cost of shared ward accommodation in a public hospital in Australia is \$255 per day. International students are not eligible for Medicare - the Australian government's public health insurance system. Without access to the safety net of Medicare, international students may have difficulty paying for medical treatment. As a result, overseas student health cover (OSHC) was introduced to ensure international students have adequate health care arrangements during their stay in Australia. OSHC ensures international students can access appropriate health care without undue financial hardship.

Additionally, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) requires all holders of a student visa to maintain OSHC.

DIMIA advises that international students who do not maintain their OSHC will have their visas cancelled.

Overseas student health cover (OSHC) was introduced in March 1989 to provide self-funded medical and hospital cover for overseas students and their dependants. OSHC was originally introduced to:

- ☞ ensure that the cost of health insurance did not serve as a disincentive to prospective overseas students;
- ☞ minimise the risk of bad debt to hospitals, doctors and other health professionals;
- ☞ ensure the costs of providing health services to government-sponsored students was clearly attributable; and
- ☞ make sure there was no, or minimal, cost to the Australian taxpayer for the provision of health services to overseas students.

Changes to OSHC

Until 31 December 1999, OSHC was provided to international students under a sole –provider arrangement with Medibank Private. Changes to the National Health Act 1953 mean that, since 1 January 2000, other Australian registered health benefits organisations are able to offer OSHC policies. These policies must be approved by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The changes, by encouraging competition for the delivery of OSHC products, were designed to ensure:

- ☞ overseas students and their accompanying family members have access to affordable medical and hospital treatment while studying in Australia;
- ☞ accessible and efficient service delivery; and
- ☞ students have a clear understanding of their benefits.

The changes also allow students to take out additional cover in the form of Extra OSHC . Health funds that wish to offer OSHC must sign a deed with the Department of Health and Ageing, which sets out the formal arrangements for the provision of OSHC. Health funds that have signed this deed and are currently offering OSHC are:

☞ Medibank Private	www.medibank.com.au	2008 A\$348
☞ OSHC Worldcare	www.oshcworldcare.com.au	2008 A\$370
☞ BUPA OSHC	www.overseasstudenthealth.com	2008 A\$299
☞ Australian Health Management	www.ahm.com.au/OSHC	2008 A\$315

(prices subject to change without notice)

All these policies are available on line at the above links and **MUST BE PURCHASED PRIOR TO VISA APPLICATION**. Proof of purchase must be submitted with your visa application and also sent to your Australian District Counsellor. You may choose the policy that suits you however, Medibank has a walk in office in most major shopping centres which makes claims very simple. Talk to your Australian District Counsellor if you have any questions.