

MEDIA RELEASE**Hands up for infection prevention: HCF dental centres' hand hygiene initiative succeeds**

Sydney, 21 November 2013 – The Dental Centre Network of Australia's largest not-for-profit private health insurer, HCF, has become the first, and largest, integrated private dental network in Australia to comply with the Hand Hygiene Australia (HHA) Initiative in New South Wales.

The HCF Dental Centre Network Hand Hygiene Program obtained a hand-hygiene rate of 86 per cent for the second-quarter reporting period of 2013, significantly higher than the national average of 78 per cent.

HCF's Managing Director, Shaun Larkin, said of the program: "Hand hygiene is vital to stopping the spread of infection and HCF is proud to be leading the way with effective hand-hygiene programs in our dental centres. Healthcare-associated infections are costly to the patient, hospitals and the community; the more we can do to prevent these infections, the better.

"We take hand hygiene very seriously and both our clinical and non-clinical staff are required to comply with numerous mandatory hand hygiene protocols and procedures to ensure the safety of our members and visitors to our facilities," he said.

HHA categorises the HCF Dental Centre Network as a "Large Day Hospital Facility". HCF outperforms other facilities in this category, with its hand-hygiene rate of 86 per cent well ahead of the average rate of 71 per cent for this group.

In addition to all of HCF's Dental Centres being registered with HHA, the centres are compliant with NSW Health Infection Control Guidelines. The hand hygiene ratings are obtained through audits conducted by recognised auditors from HHA.

Hand hygiene equipment is available and easily accessible for all staff, visitors and patients in HCF Dental Centres, and are accompanied by hand hygiene awareness posters, pamphlets and general information located throughout the centres.

The HCF network of seven Dental Centres in the Sydney metropolitan area enable members to access lower cost, high quality dental services. With 133 fully qualified dentists and 93 surgeries, and we are committed to the external evaluation of our services as part of our efforts to provide the highest level of dental care to our members.

For more information on HCF's Dental Centre Network, please visit <http://www.hcf.com.au/dental>

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