

Australians will travel: but do we know the price to pay?

(Brisbane) 07 November 2005 – Recent forecasting figures from Tourism Australia show that despite the global environment we face, Australians will continue to travel internationally for business, to relax, take a holiday or visit family.

In fact – in 2010 it is expected around 5.6 million Australians will depart Australia for a short-term break during the year, this is almost a 20 percent increase on the 2005 figures.

With these trends in mind, Australia's largest health fund, Medibank Private, is highlighting the importance of protecting yourself and your family with appropriate insurance when travelling internationally or domestically.

Medibank Private managing director, George Savvides, said, "We need to start opening people's eyes to the potential costs and risks of unexpectedly being ill or involved in an accident away from home.

"We're not convinced people understand the real financial risk of being caught without insurance. The cost of a holiday can quickly multiply if a family member unexpectedly falls ill or has an accident," he said.

Medibank Private has recently made a move into the travel insurance market with policies due for launch around the country in November.

"We understand the costs involved in ensuring the safety and good health of our members when they are away from home – we're asking the question of Australians travelling do you really understand the risk of not being covered," Mr Savvides said.

"Planning for a holiday you are likely to budget for travel and accommodation expenses plus some spending money. You never budget for the possible thousands of dollars it could cost in medical fees if you were to fall snowboarding and injure your back or end up in hospital with dehydration after a severe case of food poisoning in a foreign country," said Mr Savvides.

Medibank Private's message is that PAMMIC avoids PANIC.

To avoid PANIC travellers need:

P - Passport

A – Airline tickets

M - Money

M - Medicines

I - Insurance

C – Camera

Medibank Private Travel Insurance is underwritten by Allianz Australia and supported by Mondial Assistance, the world leader in the provision of assistance and travel insurance. The Mondial Assistance global response centre team based in Brisbane includes qualified doctors and nurses who can deploy medical assistance to anywhere in the world.

Please note that a number of case studies are attached.

Ends...

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Some cases handled recently by Mondial Assistance demonstrate the increasing need for adequate travel cover.

Case Study A:

A young traveller had just began his first holiday in the USA when he was bitten by a moose tick. He suffered an adverse reaction resulting in Lime Disease which impacted on the functioning of his heart. This put him in grave danger of suffering heart attack and stroke.

He was immediately transported to a nearby hospital and after a two weeks in hospital out-patient care, he came home on a business class ticket ensuring a level of comfort required by his condition.

Had this man not been covered by travel insurance, this random accident incorporating expensive US hospital care could have cost him in excess of \$150,000.

Case Study B:

A middle-aged Australian woman was recently holidaying in an isolated Asian province with her husband.

After suffering from headaches for a few days she became ill with what she believed to be pulmonary adema (altitude sickness). A few hours later she could not walk and was paralysed from the waist down. She was admitted into a local hospital, suffered a cerebral hoemorage and fell into a coma.

Once Mondial Assistance became aware of her condition she was transferred to a major Beijing hospital to lower her altitude and to be diagnosed and treated by English speaking specialists.

She received an emergency operation for her to abstract hemocele from her intracranium and a tumor was also has been found in her brain.

In the meantime, Mondial Assistance covered the costs of her husband to travel with her to Beijing and to be comfortably accommodated nearby, in addition to extending both the passengers' visas. He also received daily support from Mondial Assistance doctors and call centre staff.

The patient was eventually repatriated back to Australia in a stable condition and transferred by Mondial Assistance medical staff to the most appropriate hospital in Australia.

Travel Insurance became a valuable benefit to this couple, with expenses mounting to more than \$185,000.

Case Study C:

An elderly man was travelling to the USA to visit his family. Immediately upon arrival he felt unwell, was admitted into hospital and diagnosed with pneumonia.

Upon recovering, the man was able to continue his stay for a month in America and underwent an examination prior to his return to Australia to ensure he was fit to travel again.

While he was only in the hospital for less than a week, the expenses mounted to over \$70,000. Without insurance cover in place, he would have been liable to pay this bill himself.

Case Study D:

A young Australian mother recently visited Bali on a holiday with her daughter. Towards the end of the eight day holiday, the daughter contracted an ear infection and was instructed by doctors not to fly. The holiday had to be extended by four days – until the daughter was well enough to travel.

Money had to be transferred directly to the mother in Bali to pay for her additional accommodation and medical expenses.

A total of \$1,800 was transferred, allowing the family to wait comfortably until the daughter recovered and could fly home – next to an investment of \$110 for the original policy the value is obvious.

Ends...

Mondial Assistance Group: an intervention every 3 seconds, anywhere in the world.

Worldwide leader in assistance, travel insurance and customer services, today Mondial Assistance Group counts nearly 7,600 staff members speaking over 40 languages. They work throughout the world in collaboration with a network of 400,000 service providers and 240 correspondents. 250 million people, or 4% of the world population, benefit from the Group's services, which it proposes on 5 continents in 28 countries. The Group mainly operates under its three international brands: ELVIA, Mondial Assistance and World Access. Mondial Assistance Group is a member of the Allianz Group through AGF and RAS International, each holding a 50% capital stake.

www.mondial-assistance.com.au

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