

## **Healthcare funders happy to talk**

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*Director-general Precious Matsoso pleads with medical schemes and stakeholders to come up with innovative and inclusive ideas*

The Department of Health has initiated dialogue with healthcare funders, which have complained about being sidelined, on their envisaged role under the proposed National Healthcare Insurance (NHI).

Uncertainty has surrounded the government's green and white papers on the implementation and rollout of universal healthcare coverage since their release in 2011 and 2015.

Department director-general Precious Matsoso met the Board of Healthcare Funders and the Healthcare Funders Association on Tuesday.

During the meeting, Matsoso made a plea to the bodies representing medical schemes, among others, to come up with innovative and inclusive ideas on what they envisioned their role would be under the NHI.

Association chairman Graham Anderson said this was an encouraging development because medical schemes had previously felt alienated.

Matsoso proposed during the meeting that medical schemes develop comprehensive benefit cover suitable for all lifestyle measure groups.

"We have the infrastructure to look after 8.5-million people and could expand it to look after anyone who can afford to pay for NHI," said Anderson. "The rest of the patients would be subsidised or whatever the department decides".

Anderson said industry funders needed to get together to take advantage of the opportunity presented to them to assist the government — especially the chance to work out finer details, such as where patients would receive treatment under a health system that promoted universal coverage.

Zola Mtshiya of the Board of Healthcare Funders said the organisation was excited the department wanted to work with the private sector. "This is consistent with what [the board] has been saying all the years."

The NHI had its first major cash injection in February, when the Treasury announced the establishment of an NHI fund.

The fund aims to improve access to services including maternal healthcare, family planning and mental health.

By MICHELLE GUMEDE – Businesslive