

MOTIVATION IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION:

Review of Access to Healthcare for Transgender and Gender Diverse Members

Discovery Health Medical Scheme ("the Scheme") has publicly committed itself to member-centred healthcare, responding to evolving healthcare needs, stakeholder engagement, and acting in the best interests of members. The Scheme has also emphasised quality, value-based healthcare, equitable access, and the importance of providing members with access to safe, efficient and effective healthcare.

This motion is motivated by the belief that these commitments warrant a structured and transparent review of the Scheme's approach to access to healthcare for transgender and gender diverse members, including healthcare relating to gender incongruence as reflected in current international and South African clinical and classification frameworks.

The purpose of the proposed review is not to direct the Board of Trustees towards any predetermined outcome, nor to compel the adoption of specific benefit changes or funding decisions. Rather, it seeks to assess whether the Scheme's current policies, practices and decision-making frameworks are aligned with current clinical evidence, recognised standards of care, constitutional values and the Scheme's own stated commitments.

Transgender and gender diverse South Africans are members of the Scheme and, like all members, rely on the Scheme to provide access to appropriate healthcare, clear information, fair processes and dignified treatment. However, uncertainty can arise regarding available healthcare pathways, applicable clinical criteria, funding decisions, review processes and appeal mechanisms, making it difficult for members to understand how decisions are made and whether they are receiving fair and equitable consideration.

The healthcare landscape relating to transgender health has evolved significantly over the past decade. Internationally, the World Health Organization's ICD-11 classification of gender incongruence reflects an evolution in clinical understanding away from pathologisation and towards reducing stigma while supporting access to appropriate care and health insurance coverage. In the South African context, the Southern African HIV Clinicians' Society has published a gender-affirming healthcare guideline for South Africa, providing locally relevant clinical guidance that further supports the need for a review informed by current evidence and recognised standards of care.

Given these developments, members have a legitimate interest in understanding how the Scheme evaluates current clinical evidence and recognised standards of care, and how it applies those standards within its benefit design, funding and managed care frameworks.

The proposed review is also grounded in South Africa's constitutional values. The Constitution places human dignity, equality, privacy and access to healthcare services at the centre of the democratic order. These values are directly relevant whenever healthcare systems, policies and practices affect people's ability to access clinically appropriate care and navigate healthcare systems fairly and transparently.

The Scheme has itself recognised the importance of values-driven governance and, in its Integrated Report, refers to human rights, equitable access to healthcare, reducing inequalities and remaining responsive to evolving healthcare needs. The Scheme further uses language referring to affordable, equitable and inclusive access to quality healthcare. A review of the Scheme's approach to healthcare for transgender and gender diverse members is entirely consistent with these commitments.

Transparency is also an important consideration: members should be able to access clear, understandable and publicly available information about healthcare pathways, eligibility criteria, decision-making processes, review mechanisms and available support.

Meaningful stakeholder engagement is also important. The Scheme has acknowledged the value of member engagement and member voices in strengthening healthcare systems. A review process that includes engagement with affected members, clinicians and relevant experts would provide valuable insight into member experiences, barriers to access and opportunities for improvement.

Importantly, this motion does not seek to predetermine the outcome of the review or interfere with the fiduciary and statutory duties of the Board of Trustees. Rather, it seeks a transparent, evidence-based and good-faith assessment of whether the Scheme's current approach appropriately serves transgender and gender diverse members while remaining consistent with the Scheme's governance obligations and commitment to acting in the best interests of members.

The requested review would provide an opportunity for the Scheme to demonstrate leadership in evidence-based healthcare governance, strengthen transparency and member trust, and ensure that its approach remains responsive to evolving healthcare needs in a manner that is fair, accountable and aligned with South Africa's constitutional values and the Scheme's own published human-rights and governance values.

For these reasons, members are respectfully requested to support the motion.