Ex-Telstra executive Ballantyne takes charge of Healthscope

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Mr Ballantyne, who is replacing Robert Cooke as chief executive of private hospital group Healthscope, returns to corporate Australia after taking a year off after leaving Telstra, where he was group executive of the domestic retail business.

There has been a steady flow of executive changes in the healthcare sector, with former banker Craig Drummond taking charge of Medibank last year and Ramsay Health Care recently appointed its chief operating officer Craig McNally to the top gig, with Chris Rex leaving mid-year. Primary Health Care is also on the hunt for a new chief executive.

Mr Ballantyne, who will be paid an annual salary of $1.6 million, takes on the top role in a challenging environment for the sector. Healthscope's outgoing boss Mr Cooke warned last year about slowing growth and the need of new initiatives to adjust the company's cost base to better respond to market volatility.

The new chief, who also founded Telstra Health, is not overly concerned about the challenges or the regulatory environment. There is a clear strategy, including a $1.2bn expansion plan that would be pursued looking at the cost base.