

CCHQ 2022

STRONG ECONOMY. STRONGER FUTURE.

12 May 2022

Ms Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer
Consumers Health Forum of Australia
Via email: l.wells@chf.org.au

Dear Ms Wells,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your organisation. A response to your questions is attached.

The last two years have been tough for our country.

Despite the setbacks, Australia's economic recovery is leading the world.

Unemployment is at 4%, the equal lowest in 48 years. And the recent Budget included the biggest turnaround in our finances in over 70 years.

There's much more to be done. To build a stronger future, our plan will:

1. Deliver more jobs and working towards unemployment below 4%.
2. Deliver tax relief for workers and small businesses.
3. Invest in roads, rail, water infrastructure and renewable energy technology.
4. Make record investments in health and other essential services.
5. Invest in stronger defence, security and borders.

This election provides a clear choice, with real consequences for Australia.

The alternative at this election is Anthony Albanese and Labor. Labor would weaken our economy and put Australia's recovery at risk. Now is not the time to change course.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO CONSUMERS HEALTH FORUM OF AUSTRALIA

Primary Health

Australia has a health system that is the envy of most other nations. Working together, primary health care services have helped to deliver some of the best health outcomes in the world and have been at the forefront of our COVID response.

The Morrison Government will continue to build and strengthen our primary care system through the Coalition's *Future-focused primary health care: Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032* - delivering even better outcomes for Australian people, health care providers and the health care system. The Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032 will support primary health care providers to embrace other advances - in telehealth; in digital health; and in other health care technologies including point of care testing, genomics and pharmacogenomics and precision medicine.

The focus of the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032 is on Australia's primary health care services provided through general practices, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, community pharmacies, allied health services, mental health services, community health and community nursing services and dental and oral health services.

The Morrison Governments' comprehensive 10 Year Plan supports reform and staged investment in primary health care over time, to ensure any funding and policy changes deliver real improvements in patient care and outcomes. \$1.7 billion has been invested in the Plan to date.

Medicare funding is at record levels under the Morrison Government and will grow from \$31.4 billion in 2022-23 to an estimated \$35.5 billion in 2025-26, up from \$19 billion in 2012-13.

One of the Morrison Government central reforms was making Telehealth permanent, which includes over \$5 billion invested to date and over 100 million consultations for over 17 million people.

The Morrison Government's rural health package invests \$146 million in new funding to support greater access in rural and regional Australia. This includes \$87 million to provide additional workforce incentives to GP's and allied health professionals in rural Australia.

Since the Coalition came into government in 2013, bulk-billing rates have risen to record levels. This means that more Australians than ever are able to visit their doctor free of charge.

In Labor's last year in Government, bulk billing rates were at 82.2%. Since then, bulk billing rates have risen to 88.8% (2020-21 financial year) - which is 6.8 percentage points higher than when Labor was last in Government.

This means that nearly 9 in 10 visits to the doctor are free for patients.

We continue to work constructively with all stakeholders, including the Consumer Health Forum on the future of Australia's primary care system.

Preventative Health

The Morrison Government's *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030* aims to improve the health of all Australians through physical activity, better nutrition and reducing alcohol and other harmful drug use. The Morrison Government is providing an additional \$30.1 million for the Strategy through the 2022-23 Budget, focusing on increasing physical activity, nutrition and increasing screening post COVID-19.

The Morrison Government will focus on preventive health post COVID-19 by encouraging Australians to catch up on regular health checks, diagnostic screening and other preventive health activities. This \$55.7 million investment includes: \$9.7 million for mammogram surge capacity at BreastScreen Australia; \$10.2 million for a triage nurse pilot to help improve colonoscopy access; \$20 million for cervical cancer screening, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;

The Morrison Government will continue core activities under the five National Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategies 2018–2022, aiming to eliminate HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs as public health threats by 2030.

The Morrison Government will develop a whole-of-government National Nutrition Policy Framework to identify, prioritise, drive and monitor healthy eating in Australia and support a feasibility study examining unhealthy food and drink advertising to children and establish a culturally and linguistically diverse Health Advisory Group.

The \$10.6 million investment by the Morrison Government will help all Australians understand the importance of preventive health and access to health services including investing more than \$830 million to deliver alcohol and other drug treatment services and programs over the next four years. This includes the National Ice Action Strategy and expanding the national Take Home Naloxone (THN) program through a \$19.6 million investment. The Morrison Government's nationwide goal is to make this lifesaving, overdose-reversal medication available at no cost and without a prescription.

On 4 March 2022, the Morrison Government launched Australia's first National Obesity Strategy, an ambitious 10-year framework for action to prevent and reduce overweight and obesity in Australia. The strategy has two ambitious goals—to halt the rise and reverse the trend in the prevalence of obesity in adults and to reduce overweight and obesity in children and adolescents by at least five per cent by 2030.

Consistent with the Morrison Government's National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030, no single action will be enough to prevent and reduce obesity, instead, a systems-based approach that tackles the environmental influences and empowers individuals will be critical.

This holistic approach calls up existing government policies, such as the Healthy Food Partnership Reformulation Program, where the Morrison Government is working with food companies to gradually reduce sugar, sodium, and saturated fat in processed and manufactured foods.

The Morrison Government is also working with industry to increase the uptake of the front-of-pack Health Star Rating system, which 23% of Australian consumers report helps them choose healthier packaged and processed food and drinks.

Consistent with these supply-side measures, the National Obesity Strategy aims to reduce exposure of consumers to unhealthy food and drink marketing, promotion, and sponsorship especially for children. For example, the Strategy aims to reduce unhealthy food and drink advertising, branding and sponsorship in places visited by large numbers of people, especially children (like vending machines, supermarket checkouts and aisles, entertainment, and sporting venues).

These measures will reinforce industry self-regulation under the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Food & Beverages Advertising Code, which was re-launched in November 2021 with a range of new measures to respond to evolving community expectations, especially around marketing to children.

Dental

The Morrison Government is supporting the dental health of Australians through a range of programs.

The Child Dental Benefits Schedule supports the oral health of eligible children up to 17 years of age. Since its commencement on 1 January 2014, the Child Dental Benefits Schedule has provided over \$2.5 billion in benefits and delivered over 40.7 million services to more than 3.1 million children (as at 31 January 2022).

In the 2021-22 Budget, the Morrison Government announced an additional \$7.3 million from 2021-22 to allow children under the age of two to access the Child Dental Benefits Schedule. These changes came into effect on 1 January 2022.

In the 2022–23 Budget, the Morrison Government announced \$107.8 million to continue support for adult public services through a Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) until 30 June 2023, providing treatment to an additional 180,000 public dental patients.

Over the past nine years the Coalition Government has committed to supporting public dental services for adults and has delivered an additional 1.8 million dental services. Through the Government's support of three National Partnership Agreements and the Federation Funding Agreement wait times for public dental service have been reduced from an average of 20 months to 12 months over the span of these agreements.

Through the National Health Reform Agreement, the Federal Government contributes funds to support the states and territories for dental services delivered through public hospitals. This includes services provided through emergency departments, hospitals, and community health settings. Between 2017–18 and 2020-21 the Government provided approximately \$719.7 million in funding for these services

The Government also supports access to private sector dental services through the Private Health Insurance (PHI) rebate. In the 2021–22 Budget \$6.7 billion (\$27.8 billion between 2021–22 and 2024–25) was committed for the PHI rebate, to make private health insurance more affordable. In 2018-19, \$718 million was provided to support dental services through the PHI Rebate.

Youth Health

The Morrison Government is committed to supporting young people and the issues they face with practical measures that reflect their priorities; supporting them to develop the knowledge, skills and capabilities to be successful in education, work and life.

The Morrison Government launched the National Action Plan for Children and Young People in 2019. This plan outlines the Morrison Government's approach to improving health outcomes for all children

and young people. It aims to ensure that children and young people, from all backgrounds and all walks of life, have the same opportunities to fulfil their potential, and are healthy safe and thriving. The National Action Plan for Children and Young People included funding to establish the Youth Health Forum to bring together a group of young people aged 16 - 30 to share their views on the Australian health and social care system.

In August 2021, the Government launched [Australia's Youth Policy Framework](#), following consultations with young Australians. The policy framework sets out a blueprint for how the Government is supporting young people to navigate life's challenges and be engaged and active citizens who contribute productively to society.

The mental health and wellbeing of young Australians is a key priority for the Morrison Government.

The almost \$3 billion National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, outlined in the Morrison Government's 2021-22 and 2022-23 Budgets, represents the single largest Commonwealth investment in mental health and suicide prevention in Australia's history. It takes the total mental health and suicide prevention funding to an estimated record \$6.8 billion in 2022-23 in the health portfolio alone – a more than 100 per cent increase since 2012-13 when Labor was last in Government - and helps set Australia up for the future by introducing landmark reforms and will transform mental health care.

As part of this, in October 2021 the Morrison Government launched the world's first [National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#), backed by more than \$317 million. A world first, the Child Strategy focuses on the mental health and wellbeing of children from birth through to 12 years of age, as well as the families and communities that nurture them. The Government will continue to deliver on key priorities of the strategy including the creation of a national network of new Head to Health Kids mental health and wellbeing centres, online parenting education and support programmes and expansion of Medicare support for family members and/or carers.

The Morrison Government will ensure young Australians and their families get the help they need, where and when they need it, by investing close to \$1 billion to substantially enhance and expand the headspace network. This includes increasing the number of headspace centres to 164, up from just 56 in 2013, delivering eheadspace and increasing the number of staff at headspace services across the country, to reduce wait times and ensure more young people can access support. \$14.3 million will also continue funding for the headspace Schools Suicide Prevention Activities Program, Flying headspace, and the headspace Digital Work and Study Program. In addition, to ensure continuity of care for vulnerable young Australians experiencing, or at risk of, psychosis, the Morrison Government will provide a further \$206.5 million for the Early Psychosis Youth Services (EPYS) program, which is delivered by headspace. This includes expanding the program to the ACT and Tasmania, meaning the network will be able to help young people in every state and territory.

The Morrison Government will continue to enhance treatment for eating disorders by providing \$20 million to establish new community-based eating disorder services. This builds on the Morrison Government's track record as the first Australian Government to specifically recognise the devastating impact of eating disorders - among the most deadly of psychiatric illnesses and a key challenge for young Australians - and provide more than \$250 million for dedicated services and support, including funding for new Medicare items to enable people with an eating disorder to receive up to 40 psychology and 20 dietetic treatment sessions per year, funding the establishment of six residential eating disorder treatment centres, and providing \$13 million for a National Eating Disorder Research Centre.

A re-elected Morrison Government will also further support mental health and wellbeing in education and home environments, including by providing \$9.7 million for nationally consistent mechanisms to better manage mental health and wellbeing concerns in schools, \$1.8 million for the Raising Children Network, \$3.3 million for the Raise Foundation to deliver its best-practice, early intervention and prevention student mentoring program to vulnerable students for a further two years, and \$3.8 million for *batyr* to expand its youth-led *OurHerd* digital platform.

The Morrison Government recognises that building a strong mental health workforce through education and training is key to delivering better outcomes for young Australians and has developed a 10 year National Mental Health Workforce Strategy in consultation with the mental health sector and states and territories.

To support immediate action, the Morrison Government will build on investments in the 2021-22 Budget for mental health scholarships through \$18.3 million to deliver up to 660 supervised nursing and allied health student and graduate mental health placements; 75 psychology internships and 150 free endorsed supervisor training sessions; and \$28.6 million to support 30 psychiatry training positions and supervisors.

Conclusion

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to work with the Consumers Health Forum to build on these initiatives and further Information on our Plan to Strengthen Australia's World Class Healthcare system is available via <https://www.liberal.org.au/strengthening-australias-world-class-health-system>