

Consumers Shaping Health



News and views on health consumer issues - Feb 2022



The health budget as a living investment

The enduring strand that threads through our [pre-budget submission](#) is the call on Government to accept health funding as an investment that pays dividends of a healthier nation and healthier economy.

The notion that health expenditure is a cost never to be recouped is not supported by the evidence. As we have seen through the pandemic, disease and fear of disease carries huge costs in lost productivity for the economy that are only turned around by a healthy population and the confidence that inspires.

So our budget proposals support a wellness and “health in all policies” approach that argues for broad social positives such as sustainable income support and public housing along with measures that will build our capability for better health and care.

Our budget policy pitch ranges across numerous parts of the health system, from continuing support for the [Youth Health Forum](#) to reflect the growing voices of the future, to an increase for the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies Program to counter recent funding cuts to important community health organisations.

There is a rising imperative for informed consumer leadership to complement and balance the powerful provider and commercial influences in health. That’s why we are pushing for funding of a fresh initiative: to establish an Australian Consumer Leadership Academy with the objective of developing a pipeline of consumer leaders with the skills and expertise to occupy high level positions in the health system. This goes to a central role of CHF to advocate for consumers and for more efficient and effective health care and policy.

One area where CHF is collaborating with health professionals is in pressing for the development of more effective health practices enabled by social prescribing and we are arguing for that to be included in the 10-year Primary Health Care Plan.

We also call on the Federal Government to increase investment in primary health with the first step to increase the Medicare Benefits Schedule rebates for Primary Health services, for General Practitioners and others with the aim of at least restoring the real value of the rebates.

Oral and Dental Care is another key area of long-sought public funding and CHF calls for a move to a universal dental health scheme, starting with the establishment of a Seniors Dental Benefit Scheme.

On COVID, we argue that the Government should ensure that with all pandemic testing and treatment services cost in not a barrier to access. And we advocate for the establishment, like other countries, of a Centre for Disease Control to equip us with the knowledge to counter epidemics.

That would certainly be a living investment paying dividends into the future.

Leanne Wells

Chief Executive Officer



News and updates



Latest COVID information from *healthdirect*

Questions about how to best respond to COVID just keep on coming. Fortunately, Australia's premier health information site, [healthdirect](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au), provides a comprehensive up to date source on what consumers need to know about COVID.

[healthdirect's National COVID-19 helpline](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthdirect-national-covid-19-helpline) provides help 24/7 for people if they have tested positive for COVID-19 (1800 020 080).

It's a convenient, accessible source of information that helps take pressure off the health system, in particular our GP and emergency services.

Here are links that will help you with questions posed by the pandemic:

- [What to do if you have COVID](#) – easy guide for isolating and gateway to comprehensive FAQ infohub
- [What are COVID-19 rapid antigen tests \(RATs\)](#) and where can I buy them?

- How to prepare a kit to [manage COVID-19 at home](#)
- COVID-19 [Symptom Checker tool](#) – updated to help people understand their symptoms and know when to seek medical help

And there's more for those seeking additional information:

- Symptom Checker helps COVID-positive Australians know [when to seek medical help](#)
- *healthdirect* launches [guide for COVID-19](#) positive Australians

There is also a fact sheet poster, specifically intended for clinic and practice waiting rooms and to be translated into multiple languages.

Link: [What to do if you have COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)

And you can download the [healthdirect app](#)



Have your say about 'Cosmetic Surgeons'

Do you have an opinion about the use of the term 'cosmetic surgeon'?

In response to the October 2021 ABC 4 Corners exposé titled *Cosmetic Cowboys*, the Victorian Department of Health is taking the lead in running a national survey on the use of the title 'surgeon' including 'cosmetic surgeon'.

They want to hear opinions from individuals, including those with personal experiences, to understand if the term causes confusion or potential harm to the public.

We strongly encourage those who have had personal experiences of cosmetic surgery or cosmetic surgeons to complete the survey.

The survey is open until 1 April.

You can fill in the survey here: [Cosmetic Surgery Consultation - Phase 1 | QuestionPro Survey](#)

If you have particular issues on this topic that you wish to raise, please send your comments to **Dr Penelope Bergen** on email on p.bergen@chf.org.au by **6 March**. CHF will be putting in a submission to this review.



Living with pain - Asking painful questions.

Living with pain can be challenging. Finding the best possible management can also be challenging – because everyone experiences pain in a unique way. Hear more about the experiences of people living with pain and of healthcare professionals involved in pain management in the video series,

NPS MedicineWise has created these videos of people's experience living with chronic pain. If you are taking opioids for chronic pain, you may find your pain levels and quality of life actually improve when opioids are reduced or stopped.

[FOR MORE](#)

Draft National Medicines Policy Consultation Draft

DRAFT

National Medicines Policy Review

The National Medicines Policy Review Committee is inviting feedback on the draft National Medicines Policy.

A 'consultation survey' is now open [Consultation Draft - National Medicines Policy](#).

We strongly encourage you to submit your own feedback via the survey. Note that the timeframe is extremely short (closes 2 March).

CHF would also like to invite you to a consumer feedback discussion for you to contribute to CHF's submission.

We look forward to seeing those who can make it next week Tuesday 15 February at 2pm – 3pm.

Contact Policy Officer Quality Use of Medicines, [Dr Penelope Bergen](#) on email on p.bergen@chf.org.au for details about accessing the consultation or a copy of the survey questions.



Medicare in 2022

Medicare is Australia's universal health care system and helps Australians with the cost of their health care. Medicare was established 38 years ago on Feb 1st 1984 and since then much has changed about Australia, the world and healthcare.

To mark the 38th anniversary of this fundamental part of the Australian healthcare system, for February we are asking what you think of Medicare in this short poll.

[DO THE POLL](#)

Events

Legal need as a social determinant of health

What role do legal and justice systems play in people's health? And how can we use the law more strategically in the pursuit of health equity?

Join Sir Michael Marmot and Professor Sharon Friel, some of the world's leading thinkers on the social determinants of health inequity, in a conversation with Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine about legal need as a social determinant of health and justice as an institution for impact on health inequity.

This is a part of conversations series with [Health Justice Australia](#)

Tickets are \$80 for this online event, Wed 16 Feb 2022, 8:00 - 9:00 am (AEST)

[FOR MORE](#)

Australia's Health Panel



Get your patient experience into the policy discussion

Australia's Health Panel is an interactive online platform devoted to harnessing the views of Australians about the state of the nation's health care system.

We invite you to encourage family and friends to have a say on the pressing issues in healthcare by joining the panel.

Find out more about what you said - on the [preventative health strategy](#), [COVID vaccine passports](#) and [consumers participating in research](#) - [See the results](#) or [Join the Panel](#)

AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH PANEL

COVID-19 vaccine rollout



Information from the Australian Department of Health

Use the Department of Health's [Clinic Finder](#) to book your your COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccine [information in your language](#)

ATAGI advice on [vaccinating children](#) 5 - 11 years

The [Omicron variant](#)

The COVID-19 [restriction checker](#) from *healthdirect* is a search tool to help you find the restrictions in your state or territory as advice changes about COVID-19.

Advice from ATAGI about the [use of the AstraZeneca vaccine](#) during an outbreak.

COVID-19 news and media updates [from the Dept of Health](#)

Find the [answers to your questions](#) from medical experts.

Use the Department of Health page on [COVID-19 vaccinations](#) to access priority resources including videos and social media campaigns.

You can visit [healthdirect](#) or see your doctor for medical advice.

FOR MORE

Get involved



Consumer representative program

Consumer representatives are nominated for national committees to ensure that the views and interests of health consumers are represented at the national level. CHF supports consumer representatives by providing resources in a number of ways. Find out how to become a [Consumer Rep](#)

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are a way for members and the broader consumer community to be involved in our advocacy work and in shaping policy.

Special Interest Groups to focus on Primary Health Care, Research & Data, Digital Health, Safety & Quality and Rural & Remote. SIGs help us to features even more consumer insight and perspective reflective of our Australian community. Find out more about CHF [Special Interest Groups](#).

Opportunities to join SIGs are advertised in newsletters and on our website.

FIND OUT ABOUT SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Participate in research



Media releases and editorial

[Happy birthday Medicare but are you still with it?](#)

Medicare is nearly 40 years old and it's time to have a rethink of our much-valued universal health care insurance scheme? What aspects of Medicare do you think work well and what needs improving? These are two of the questions we pose in our short Australia's Health Panel survey out today. ...2 Feb 2022 — Media release

[Health budget must counter COVID cracks](#)

The Federal budget must step up investments in health and social wellbeing if

Australia's health system is to come out of the COVID pandemic ... 1 Feb 2022 — Media release

[Learning how to live with COVID into the future: the case for better public health messaging](#)

We are moving to a new stage in our response to COVID which demands changes not just from government and the health system, but more particularly from people and communities. COVID is likely to be circulating widely for some years. As we adjust to that reality increasingly people will work out... 27 Jan 2022 — Blog

[If you want valuable insights from health consumers you engage with, you should start by paying us](#)

For Patient and Health Consumer Advocates it's a familiar and off-putting first thought when someone approaches us about joining a committee, attending a working group session, or speaking at an event to share our insight into health system reform and innovation from a very different and incredibly ... 24 Jan 2022 — Blog

[Open access to RATs makes most sense for the health of all](#)

Rapid antigen testing kits should be universally available to all people in Australia who need them, the Consumers Health Forum said today. "We welcome plans for provision of up to 10 free tests for concession and health care card holders through community pharmacy - this is a critical and overdue..." 6 Jan 2022 — Media release

[Let's work for unity and harmony on COVID this Christmas](#)

The National Cabinet meeting tomorrow must show united leadership now and resolve on concerted action to counter the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, the Consumers Health Forum said today. "The soaring infection figures in several states make it clear this is not the time for relaxation of..." 21 Dec 2021 — Media release

[Preventive policy charts path to a healthier future](#)

We welcome the National Preventive Health Strategy released today which sets out a positive agenda for a future healthier Australia, backed by the aim to earmark 5 per cent of the health budget for preventive action by 2030. The strategy identifies seven focus areas for ... 13 Dec 2021 — Media release

[Telehealth now a permanent part of Medicare](#)

The announcement today assuring telehealth's future as a permanent part of Medicare acknowledges its vital role in enabling access to GPs, specialists and allied health professionals, we said ... 13 Dec 2021 — Media release

[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & OPINION](#)

CHFTalks webinar series

Where to now for digital health?

A special presentation on telehealth and virtual care

Virtual health uses digital technologies to deliver a broad range of health and community-based services to improve and support your health and wellbeing.

Professor Suzanne Robinson and A/Prof Richard Norman from Curtin University will present their findings from recently completed studies done in partnership with CHF, funded by the Digital Health CRC and the Australian Government Department of Health.

Professors Robinson and Norman were joined by distinguished guests;

- Professor Tim Shaw, Professor of eHealth, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney
- Amanda Cattermole PSM, CEO Australian Digital Health Agency

- Dr Amandeep Hansra, GP and Digital Health Consultant
- Laila Hallam, Consumer Advocate and Chair, HCSNW Covid taskforce

Facilitated by CHF CEO, Leanne Wells

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

Covering COVID: media in the age of the pandemic

How well has the media handled the demands of reporting on and analyzing the biggest pandemic in a century? What have we learnt?

Hear from researchers, and journalists, including Professor Kerry McCallum, Dr Norman Swan and Dr Sanjaya Senanayake in a discussion about trust in the news, how COVID has impacted health literacy and how the Australian media landscape is holding up.

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

A primer on Primary Health Care reform

Ever wondered what's wrong with the Australian Health Care system? If it were up to you - what what YOU do to fix it.

Learn about Primary Health Care reform in this webinar with GP and PHN Board member, Dr Michael Wright, Pharmacist and Senior Lecturer at Curtin, Dr Fei Sim and CEO, National Rural Health Alliance and Leanne Wells CEO, Consumers Health Forum

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

[CHF YouTube channel](#)

Resources and Information

Turn to the website of the [Department of Health](#) to find the most recent, verified information, posted daily.

Use [healthdirect Australia](#), the Australian Government Health advice portal for consumers, for [information on COVID-19](#), the [symptom checker](#) and helpline: 1800 022 222.

Healthdirect provides free, approved medical advice and has delivered information to Australians on COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. Tools and information on COVID-19 can be accessed from the [COVID-19 section](#) of the [healthdirect](#) website.

NPS MedicineWise

A new [information hub from NPS MedicineWise](#) will help you be medicine wise during COVID-19

Be Health Aware - [CHF portal for health resources](#)

The **Australian Commission of Safety and Quality** has published a [FAQ page](#) on the **safe use of masks** for consumers and a [factsheet you can download](#).

Become a member



As a member of CHF you will be kept up to date on key health reform issues through our publications and member alerts. CHF membership enables you to influence the national health agenda by contributing to CHF surveys and polls, consultations and campaigns. Members can draw on CHF position statements, media releases and policy submissions to inform your work and advocacy.

[JOIN US - Become a member](#)

[Consumers Health Forum](#)

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