

Consumers Shaping Health



News and views on health consumer issues - May 2022



There's still time to talk to your local candidates about health

In February we released the [CHF Election Platform](#) under the broad principle that all Australians should have access to the same health services wherever they live, whatever their income, and whatever their needs – equitable access to health and social care.

In recent weeks, [both major parties made announcements](#) on reducing costs for patients: reducing the PBS co-payment and raising the threshold for access to the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card (CSHC). These measures will help to bring down costs for some people on fixed incomes, but for the most part, there has been little discussion by politicians about health and health care.

With two weeks to go before the Federal Election, there is still time to engage your local candidates in a discussion on health care, and importantly health care reform. Issues such as [spiralling out of pocket costs](#), — not only for specialist's appointments, but for GP visits and basic primary health care, — and extended wait times has added to the pressures on health consumers as the cost of living increases bites on household expenditure.

The CHF Election platform draws on critical “Big Picture” components to set the scene; how do we learn from and recover from the pandemic? How

do we absorb and best use opportunities from new technology, — digital, medical, or transformative? What are the current issues and what strategies have been proposed and endorsed? How do we build a sustainable health care system?

We advocate that embedding wellness into healthcare reverses the costs of disease. Long term, wellness strategies and preventative healthcare build a healthier, more health literate population.

Lastly consumers want choice and transparency in their healthcare. We need a refined healthcare system that empowers consumers to understand the considerations and consequences of their options. How do they get independent information about procedures? Do they have the confidence to ask about alternatives? Who is doing something to keep out of pocket costs down?

Recent consumer surveys in **Australia's Health Panel** pointed to a growing phenomenon of [people funding their own](#) major treatments to access private health care more quickly than through the public system. There are risks in this to consumers should their healthcare costs suddenly become larger than expected.

The [True Issues survey](#) conducted by JWS Research in March, shows that while increases to cost of living is top of mind for Australian voters; hospitals, healthcare and aged care is the next most pressing priority.

Many voters only think about their access to health care when they experience a health crisis. Faced with hard choices about affordability of essential or important treatment, the reality hits home. By the time consumers are experiencing long wait times to get the surgery they need, or to see a specialist, they are already immersed in a health system in crisis.

Priorities for the new government should include reforming primary health care so it is affordable, timely and coordinated; [dental care in Medicare](#), a national social prescribing scheme; and [support for](#) an Australian [Consumer Leadership Academy](#).

Our next #CHFTalks webinar on 25 May: The role of communication in patient safety and quality of care, brings together researchers and clinicians; **Professor Diana Slade**, **A/Professor Carmel Crock OAM**, **Dr Mary Dahm**, **Professor Imogen Mitchell**, **Professor Anne Duggen** (ACSQHC), and **Maureen Williams** and **Darlene Cox**, consumer advocates. There will be three short presentations on communication in health care and the safety and quality considerations. Join us for this exciting conversation and [register here](#)

REGISTER

Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer



NEWS AND UPDATES



A Home Medicines Review can help you get the most out of your medicines

Anticholinergic medicines are drugs prescribed for a range of conditions and can cause side-effects — falls, confusion, trouble remembering and concentrating, dry mouth, constipation and trouble urinating.

It is easy to think these are just signs of getting older. Lots of common medicines cause these effects, and the problem is made worse as people get older and take more medicines.

A Home Medicines Review can help you get the most out of your medicines. Talk to your doctor about having a [Home Medicines Review](#) with your community pharmacist.

NPS MedicineWise, supported by OPAN, Carers Australia and FECCA have prepared resources to help. Share these [videos](#) and resources in [English](#) and [other languages](#). They help you and your carer understand your medicine options and get ready for a medicines review.

[EXPLORE](#)

WEBINAR



The role of health communication in patient safety and quality of care

Communication in health care is a major quality and safety issue. Every day in Australian hospitals, miscommunication causes avoidable critical incidents - patients die, are harmed or receive the wrong treatment because of ineffective communication, for example during handovers or diagnosis.

Consumers Health Forum (CHF) and the Australian National University (ANU) Institute for Communication in Health Care (ICH) are co-hosting this webinar on the role of communication in health care and patient safety.

Panelists:

Professor Diana Slade: Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Australian National University and the Director of the ANU Institute for Communication in Health Care.

Associate Professor Carmel Crock OAM: Director of the Emergency Department at The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

Dr Mary Dahm: Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Communication in Health Care (ICH) at the Australian National University

Maureen Williams: Consumer Advocate.

Professor Imogen Mitchell: Professor at the ANU Medical School and Senior Intensive Care Specialist at the Canberra Hospital.

Professor Anne Duggan: Chief Medical Officer, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC).

Darlene Cox: Consumer Advocate

[REGISTER](#)

CONSUMER OPPORTUNITIES

International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare - funded places for consumers

The International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare welcomes

patients, carers and service users to the conference.

When: 24-26 July 2022, Sydney

Where: Sydney

You can see the program and the event details on [the conference website](#):

Patient and Consumer funding applications are being offered for a limited number of funded places for patients, consumers, carers and service users to attend the Forum.

Applications close Monday 6 June 2022

[APPLY HERE](#)



Focus groups for review of regulation in the cosmetic surgery industry

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) have commissioned an independent review of the regulation of health practitioners in the cosmetic surgery industry. The review is looking at patient safety in the cosmetic surgery sector and how to strengthen regulation of practitioners in the industry.

The review will explore how much consumers are told about the risks of procedures, minor or major, and what role the regulators can play to prevent further harm.

You are invited to apply to take part in this project. There will be two consumer focus groups of 6-8 people to give feedback on your experience of cosmetic procedures or cosmetic surgery.

One group will be general for any age, the other group will be youth-focused for people under 30.

The focus groups will take place online (via zoom):

- **Group 1 (general)**, Wed 8 June 2-4pm, (AEST)
- **Group 2 (youth focus, under 30 years)**, Thurs 9 June, 10am-12noon, (AEST)

If you have any questions please contact Dr Penelope Bergen, CHF Policy Officer Quality Use of Medicines at p.bergen@chf.org.au

Successful participants will receive remuneration.

Expressions of interest close at midnight AEST on Monday 30 May.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Focus groups for development of a National Health Literacy Strategy

As part of the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030, the Sax Institute (which aims to improve health and wellbeing by driving the use of research in policies, programs and services) is partnering with member organisations to develop a National Health Literacy Strategy.

As part of this partnership, we are inviting you to participate in focus groups to think about what you would want from a national health literacy strategy: how to improve access to trustworthy information; what doctors and other frontline health professionals need to do to improve their health communication skills; and how consumers find trustworthy information about health.

There will be three focus groups online (via zoom):

- **People or carers living with disability**, Mon 6 June: 10am-12noon (AEST)
- **People living in rural or remote locations**, Wed 8 June: 2pm-4pm (AEST)
- **Young people under 30**, Fri 10 June: 5pm-7pm (AEST)

If you have any questions please contact **Dr Penelope Bergen**, CHF Policy Officer Quality Use of Medicines at p.bergen@chf.org.au

Successful participants will receive remuneration

Expressions of interest close at midnight AEST on Monday 30 May.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

WATCH THE REPLAY



What does the election hold for health?

A webinar to look at the health policy commitment by the parties, broadcast Wed 27 April 2022.

Join CHF, health and policy experts, and consumers to analyse the Liberal National Party and Labor Party's health policy platforms and have your questions answered.

[WATCH THE REPLAY](#)

PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH



Are you interested in digital technology and nutrition?

Tilt task consumer focus groups

Researchers at Monash University are looking for Australian healthcare consumer (aged over 18 years) who are available to participate in two focus groups.

The aim is to get feedback on a new smartphone app designed to improve your nutrition. We want to know if the app is easy to use or not.

You will need access to a smartphone and be able to use an app for up to one month.

The focus groups will be held online on:

- Tuesday 24th May 1230 - 1330 (AEST)
- Tuesday 7th June 1230 - 1330 (AEST).

You will be offered a \$100 voucher in appreciation for your time.

Any questions? Please email Dr Liz Sturgiss liz.sturgiss@monash.edu

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



Have you imported prescription medicines from overseas?

Dr Narcyz Ghinea from the Philosophy Department at Macquarie University is working on a project investigating personal importation of prescription medicines in Australia.

This occurs when patients import medicines from overseas, usually to buy cheaper medicines, or because the medicines are not available in Australia.

The research team have formulated a national survey to collect data on this topic. They are seeking consumers to test the survey and provide feedback about readability and usability. You will be asked to:

- Complete the survey (~10 minutes)
- Provide written feedback about readability and usability.
- Re-do the same survey after 10 days.

Participants should be 45 years or older, be currently taking prescription medicines and have had experience importing medicines from overseas.

You will receive a \$50 gift voucher as a token of appreciation for your time.

Please apply directly to Dr Narcyz Ghinea on narcyz.ghinea@mq.edu.au by COB (AEST) **Friday 13 May 2022**., and do not hesitate to get in touch with any questions.



Mental Health Lived Experience Advisors

Your experience matters

The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne are looking for Mental Health Lived Experience Advisors - young people (over 15 years), families and carers in Victoria.

Are you interested in sharing your experiences to help improve mental health services at the Hospital?

Your participation is always up to you. We will send you opportunities and you can choose to express your interest in the ones that you choose.

You will be paid for your expertise and participation opportunities. You will also have access to supports to make sure you are able to share your experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

If you are interested, scan this QR code and fill out a short form, or [apply here](#)

If you have any questions, please contact Emily Unity at emily.unity@rch.org.au



[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Women's sexual and reproductive health and relevant healthcare research

Consumer Representatives on ALLIANCE Trial Stakeholder Workshop

Researchers at Monash University are seeking expressions of interest from consumers to participate in a half-day Stakeholder Workshop.

The ALLIANCE Trial is to enhance the safe and effective use of contraception amongst women who are seeking emergency contraception or early medical abortion medicines.

We are seeking expressions of interest from passionate and enthusiastic people who:

- Are interested in women's sexual and reproductive health and relevant healthcare research
- Experience accessing/utilising the pharmacy setting and interacting with pharmacist
- Live in urban, regional or remote areas and/or live in the Northern Territory, New South Wales or Victoria

The workshop, to be held virtually, is scheduled for Thursday 2nd June 2022 from 10.00am – 1.30pm AEST.

Remuneration of \$50/hour will be provided for your participation in the workshop in the form of an e- voucher.

For more information about this trial and to apply email alliance.trial@monash.edu or contact Rebecca Edwards at R.Edwards@chf.org.au

Closes 19th May 2022



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

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



Media releases and editorial

[Letting the people have a voice in health care](#)

Over the past two years, Australians have become acutely aware of the impact of changing health policies, requirements and advice have had on their daily lives as we have battled the Covid-19 pandemic. We have

witnessed first-hand the stresses on the health and aged care systems ... 9 May 2022 — Blog

[Parties promise to lower healthcare costs, but primary health care reform is missing in action](#)

We welcome recent announcements from both major parties that the cost of prescriptions will be eased by reducing the PBS co-payment. In addition, both parties have committed to raising the threshold for access to the Commonwealth Seniors Card .. 5 May 2022 — Media release

[Put Aussies at the centre of health policy: call from consumer health advocates](#)

We urge all political leaders to put consumers at the centre of health policy-making in Australia, following the release of concerning new data from the OECD ... 28 Apr 2022 — Media release

[Leanne Wells stepping down as CEO](#)

After a tenure of more than seven years at the helm of CHF, current CEO Ms Leanne Wells has advised the Board of her wish to step down from the role.... 22 Apr 2022 — Blog

[Lack of universal dental care a hole that can be fixed](#)

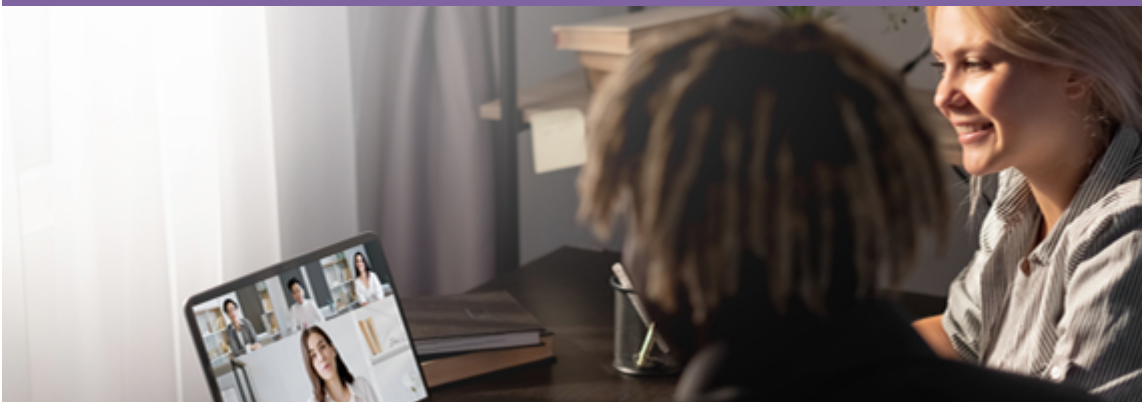
Health consumers are falling through the gaps in health care when it comes to getting their teeth checked. CHF is calling for government to address the shortfall in oral health as a fundamental part of health care by including coverage for dental health care in Medicare ...21 Apr 2022 — Media release

[Primary health care reform is the answer to Australian concerns about affordability](#)

CHF is calling for political leaders to put the health of Australians front and centre this election with prudent reform of primary health care. CHF is highlighting crucial initiatives that could have the most impact on the health of Australians, and the health care ... 14 Apr 2022 — Media release

[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & OPINION](#)

CHFTalks webinar series



Watch the webinar replays

- What does the election mean for health? — [watch the replay](#)

- The Voice of Australian Health Consumers — [watch the replay](#).
- Consumer Assessors: improving healthcare and service outcomes — [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

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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