

Federal Budget: a CHF perspective

CEO Leanne Wells talks about the health Budget to ABC Radio News interviewer Glen Bartholomew. (Edited)

Overall reaction

“We are pretty happy. The budget has promised record spending in areas of greatest concern to health care consumers. Aged care and mental health are big winners.

But it has only partly met the recommendations of two big government inquiries, recommendations they made to transform those areas to ensure 21st century care.

Importantly the Budget was framed as a pandemic recovery budget with an eye to the next election. There is essential spending on the covid response, the vaccine rollout and the very welcome measure for an onshore capability on cutting edge production of an mRNA vaccine, and spending on continuity of care measures like telehealth are really good areas for spending.

On the \$2.3billion extra on mental health

Mental health is a classic wicked problem. think while you can argue the spending --- and many commentators are saying even the \$2.3 billion extra is not enough and it probably isn't --- the direction of travel is really in the right direction. The localised Head to Health program for multidisciplinary, multi-purpose adult mental health centres, a network of those being established, expansion of HeadSpace. The digital revolution here is so important as well. And it is critical continuing to tackle suicide prevention programs.

It is an ambitious package. The key thing is where those localised services are going to be located. Being Commonwealth funded, how are they going to be integrated well with state services and systems because the last thing we want to see is Commonwealth services laid over the top of state services, states withdrawing their services or there just being poor integration between the two. The catchcry we hear all

the time about people falling through the cracks, people experiencing fragmented care, we don't want that. But the direction, the line of travel is good.

On \$1.5 billion more for telehealth, is it here to stay?

It has simply got to. The telehealth measures extended under covid are not a replacement for good face to face continuous primary health care with the GP but they are such an important part of modern health care it is hard to imagine a government turning back the dial

More drugs subsidised under the PBS

Medicine affordability is such an important issue. We know so many people even with subsidies don't fill their scripts. Our PBS is world leading in making the drugs we have affordable. Without it we would not have the world class system we have got, It's such an important part of our universal health system arrangements.

On the \$354 million women's health focus including new funding for breast cancer screening, mental health care for pregnant women, endometriosis and eating disorders

Women's health, screening and early detection is so important. We've got to invest in these, so it's really welcome. Women's welfare, jobs, productivity, domestic violence have risen as political imperatives recently so the response is not surprising

On \$13 billion more for NDIS and its rising cost along with aged care set to cost as much as Medicare in the future

They are huge commitments but equally if covid has taught us one thing it is if we don't have our health, and that includes people who need access to services like disability service, our economy falters.. Health is an investment. Aged care and residential facilities is expensive. It is an investment, and we will need to continue to ensure quality as well as access and places. Directions in aged care places are important too along with care finders for carers.