

## Changes of a lifetime we need in our health care

### *CHF's 2022 election platform*

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The once in a lifetime impact of the COVID pandemic demands a life-changing response in national health policy, the Consumers Health Forum says.

“Political leaders on all sides must respond to the unprecedented strains on our health system by embarking on fundamental reform and restructure,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said today.

“We urgently need to harness the potential of 21<sup>st</sup> Century health care and technology to drive new ways in primary health care, prevention, dental care and consumer participation and leadership.

“The pandemic has disproportionately hit the community’s most vulnerable people --- the elderly, the disabled and the disadvantaged --- who have not had priority access to vaccinations, boosters, testing and protective equipment.

“Ultimately, reforming the health system will mean a shift from fee for service care to holistic services across primary and preventive health, allied and mental health, dental health, with links to other social and wellness services, and integration with other levels of care, including transition to and from hospital care.

“A comprehensive GP-coordinated primary health scheme, providing holistic team care would enrol patients and be resourced to support all care needs and promote wellbeing. The general practice would provide continuity of care including support links to other health providers.

“In its first 12 months, we urge the incoming Government to finalise and implement a 10 Year Primary Health Care Plan with reform funding in the Government’s first Budget.

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“These immediate changes should include a roll-out plan for regional collaborative commissioning to meet pressing local health needs by Primary Health Networks and local hospital networks.

“Another priority is to start a national social prescribing scheme for people experiencing loneliness, social isolation, and other mental health risks or conditions.

“Preventive health is a focal point requiring immediate action for the 10 Year Preventive Health Strategy, and a 10 Year National Obesity Strategy, as part of commitments to devote 5 per cent of the health budget on preventive health measures. Establishing a National Centre for Disease Control must also be a priority.

“The glaring gap in our Medicare universal health system is the absence of comprehensive cover for dental care. We call for a dental benefits scheme that offers income support recipients and other low-income adults basic dental care with capped funding and choice of provider.

“What would benefit our individual health and the effectiveness of the health system substantially would be support for health consumer leadership to strengthen the case for patient-centred care.

“So often it is the patient living with chronic conditions who has a better grasp of what works for them than any individual clinician. We need to educate and empower consumer champions to take forward this advocacy and to do that we propose the establishment and government funding of an Australian Health Consumer Leadership Academy that delivers training to develop and grow a skilled, prepared, energised and motivated group of consumer leaders.

“All of these changes will require making use of new and innovative technology and digital solutions, with technology that is accessible to all. New ideas to improve digital health literacy are becoming increasingly important. The digital divide will continue to widen without them. There is much more we can achieve if we are to make the most of the potential of our health system,” Ms Wells said.

Read more about the CHF Election Platform in this article: [“Changes of a lifetime we need in our health care”](#) or access the full version of the [CHF 2022 Election Platform](#).

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