

CHF adds consumer voice to strengthening Medicare

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The Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) welcomes the Albanese Government's commitment to strengthening Medicare and the establishment of a Taskforce to listen to voices across the health sector and in the community to improve primary health services.

The Taskforce meets for the first time in Sydney today with the Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care chairing.

"The Consumers Health Forum is pleased that the Government has made a commitment to invest in urgent reform following decades of review, neglect, serial funding cuts, over reliance on fees for service, and blanket restrictions to Medicare rebates," said Leanne Wells, CEO of the Consumers Health Forum.

"The Strengthening Medicare Taskforce will drive necessary changes, and the Government's funding of almost \$1 billion over the next four years demonstrates its commitment to improving primary health.

"Including a consumer representative on the Taskforce is evidence of the Government's commitment to listening to consumer voices. We will argue that, as a first instalment on reform, the Government would do well to look to the Roadmap for reform, codeveloped by CHF and the Primary Health Network Cooperative in collaboration with several national health organisations.

"The Roadmap sets out three priorities for reform.

"Priority 1: Voluntary patient registration, enabling people with chronic and multiple health conditions to develop a relationship with their GP practice, to receive holistic and ongoing primary health and preventive care, instead of an appointment-based fee for service.

"Priority 2: Workforce Incentive Program and medical neighbourhoods, to equip practices to offer a range of multidisciplinary services, such as nursing, allied health, pharmacy and health coaches, to meet the needs of their registered patients. Practices could be supported to share resources, services and practitioners – in clusters or neighbourhoods.

"Priority 3: A national social prescribing scheme, to support GPs and their teams to help patients with the agency, health literacy, activation, skills, and services they need to self-manage their conditions. Patients would be linked with services such as lifestyle modification support, health justice providers, financial counsellors and arts and creative programs as an integral part of their care plan. This is important because debt, poor housing, poor employment outlook and family law issues can dramatically affect health care outcomes."

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Supporting attachment: *Strengthening Medicare and investing in Primary Health Care: a roadmap for reform:*

https://chf.org.au/sites/default/files/17062022_strengthening_medicare_and_investing_in_primary_health_care_a_roadmap_for_reform_final.pdf

More details about the Taskforce and its membership can be found here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-mark-butler-mp/media/strengthening-medicare-taskforce-appointed-0>

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