



Budget 2025 – More care, less cost

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Tonight's Federal Budget has made it easier for Australian healthcare consumers to afford and access the healthcare they need, when they need it, says Consumers Health Forum of Australia CEO Dr Elizabeth Deveny.

“For a long time now, what we have been hearing from consumers is that they have been struggling to afford the healthcare they need due to the rise in cost-of-living. It is great to see the Government providing Australians cost-of-living support so they can better afford essentials like healthcare and medicines,” said Dr Deveny.

CHF is supportive of the following health related Budget measures announced tonight:

- Investments into primary care which will make it easier for people to see a bulk billed GP
- Cheaper Medicines with PBS medicines being reduced to no more than \$25 per script.
- Investment into Women's Health recognising how the current system often serves Australian women poorly.

“These are all important practical changes that will make healthcare more affordable and accessible to Australians. Things like the PBS co-payment being dropped from \$31.60 down to \$25 will make a real difference to people's wallets,” said Dr Deveny.

In the lead up to the Budget, CHF advocated to strengthen Medicare through cheaper medicines and increased bulk billing and we are pleased to see that the Government has heard those calls and acted on them in tonight's Budget.

Saba, a consumer from regional New South Wales feels that: “The budget is a start, but let's ensure every community-regardless of where they come from and where they live has equal access to quality healthcare.”

There are other areas of the Budget where CHF feels not enough has been done. These include:

- **Making specialist care more affordable**– Consumers continue to tell us they can't afford to see a specialist. Low Medicare rebates and long wait times put essential care out of reach. We welcome updates to the Medical Costs Finder website but urge further reform, so no one misses out on healthcare due to cost.
- **More affordable and accessible allied healthcare** – Services like physio, dietetics and mental health care are vital for managing chronic conditions. Yet most Australians still pay out of pocket. Limited rebated sessions mean many simply go without.
- **No increase to income support** –We're disappointed there's still no rise to income support payments. We back the Raise the Rate campaign. Better incomes mean better health, this is especially important for the 1 in 6 Australian children who live in poverty.
- **Oral healthcare** – Extending public dental care funding is welcome, but it's not enough. We need a national commitment to oral health that treats it as part of overall health, not an optional extra.

The Budget also remained silent on how Australia will deal with climate change and its ongoing impact on people's health. Australia still lacks a plan for managing the health impacts of climate change and the rapid rise of AI. Both are reshaping how healthcare is delivered – we must get ahead of them, not fall behind. There is also no roadmap on preventative healthcare.

“We welcome the investment in GPs and medicines but that's only part of the story. The real test is whether you can afford the care you need, where you live, and how your life circumstances affect your health. That's where this Budget falls short,” said Dr Deveny.

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