

National survey shows Australians want major changes to fix healthcare affordability and workforce gaps

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One in ten Australians couldn't afford the medical care they needed last year, according to new national research released today by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF). The findings show Australians want major changes to make healthcare more affordable and accessible.

"What the [National Consumer Sentiment Survey 2024 Report](#) shows is that many Australians are still struggling to afford the care they need. Shockingly 1 in 10 respondents told us that in the last 12 months they couldn't afford the medical care they needed. This shows us that things aren't improving for everyone in our community," said CHF CEO Dr Elizabeth Deveny.

The survey asked 5,000 Australians across the country for their thoughts on the healthcare system across a range of areas in late 2024. The survey showed that:

- Only 32% of people felt confident they could afford necessary care if they became seriously ill.
- 49% of consumers reported at least one occasion during the last 12 months when they hadn't accessed the healthcare they needed.
- 51% were extremely or very confident they could get the care they needed if they were seriously ill.
- 55% said there were some good things about Australian healthcare but major changes are needed to make it work better.
- 28% reported not being able to see a dentist because of cost.



“Consumers have told us that Australian health remains deeply unequal, particularly for young adults, people with chronic diseases and people struggling to make ends meet.

“The survey is telling us that people are delaying or skipping care altogether because of cost and other access barriers. In 2025 the community expects that people can get healthcare when and where they need it,” said Dr Deveny.

The top 5 issues consumers identified for improvements were:

- More doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers (66%)
- The cost of care and/or medicines (59%)
- Better access to care (42%)
- Better quality of care (26%)
- Listening to patients more (25%)

Consumer Ally Finnis from Mount Gambier, has been impacted by workforce shortages and struggled to access the care they needed to manage their chronic health conditions. Reflecting on the survey findings Ally said “I wasn’t surprised by the results. I found the lack of workforce really relatable. In Mount Gambier, we’re currently experiencing a major shortage of GPs. I have had to defer creating a chronic health care plan because there are no appointments available with a GP, which I’ve been told is necessary to complete and authorise this form.”

The survey showed that almost 1 in 10 Australians (8.1%) felt that they faced some sort of stigma or discrimination when accessing the care they needed. While it is pleasing to see most Australians do not face stigma or discrimination when accessing care, we cannot forget that for those who do face it, it can be a significant barrier to engaging with the healthcare system.

Aunty Maureen a Budjiti woman living on Bidjura country in Southwest Queensland has experienced being treated differently in the healthcare system.



“When you go into the healthcare system and you identify as an Aboriginal person, people’s demeanour changes straight away, you wouldn’t think that it would in 2025, but it does. We sort of knew that this discrimination existed but after the referendum it really came out. People don’t think racism is still an issue, but it is.

“When I go into the system outside of my local area, I feel people treating me differently when I tell them I am Aboriginal,” said Aunty Maureen.

In terms of the types of health practitioners visited, the survey showed that:

- 81% had seen a GP
- 67% had visited their pharmacist
- 49% had seen a dentist
- 31% had seen a specialist
- 29% had been to a public hospital.

The survey also asked about government spending levels on healthcare, with the majority (56%) feeling that the current spending was too low.

“What we’re seeing here is a real appetite for responsible investment into healthcare. Australians are comfortable with governments spending more on health, provided it’s done wisely,” said Dr Deveny.

Dr Deveny urged the government and all members of the 48th Parliament to act on the report’s findings urgently to address affordability and workforce shortages and ensure equitable healthcare for all Australians.

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Interviews available CHF CEO Dr Elizabeth Deveny and consumer representatives featured in this release are available for media interviews upon request.