



MEDIA RELEASE

Budget shows strong steps towards structural reform, but still a long road ahead

The Federal Budget prioritised health, but allied health workforce strategy is desperately needed

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Wednesday 10.05.23

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is pleased to see 2023-24 Federal Budget measures that begin to tackle the structural reforms necessary to re-build a sustainable, consumer-focused primary health care system.

We commend this Government for its recognition that multidisciplinary care teams are vital to the holistic care and support of the consumer.

AHPA welcomes the \$6.1 million investment to support allied health professionals to develop connections to My Health Record (MHR). Allied health access to the MHR is fundamental to supporting multidisciplinary teams.

AHPA CEO, Bronwyn Morris-Donovan says: “While we recognise the limitations of the MHR, this measure has potential to improve communications between the consumer and their health care team and prevents consumers having to repeat their clinical story over and over again.”

The organisation is pleased to see \$79.4 million over four years to strengthen the role of Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in commissioning multidisciplinary health care to improve the management of chronic conditions and reduce avoidable hospitalisations.

However, whilst optimistic about the strengthened role PHNs may play in building sustainable regional models of care; AHPA cautions against a ‘one-size-fits all model’. We look forward to working closely with PHNs as they begin to comprehensively commission allied health services.

AHPA is also pleased to see investment of \$445 million over five years to increase funding for the Workforce Incentive Program (WIP), but there must be accountability for how the funding is used, coupled with a robust evaluation.

“Without accountability measures, we run the risk of more of the same, which goes no way toward improving access to multidisciplinary care for consumers.” says Morris-Donovan.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 27 national allied health association members and a further 12 affiliate members with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 150,000+ allied health professionals who work across the primary, acute and tertiary sectors in Australia.

AHPA believes it is vital that allied health professionals are recognised for their work alongside the medical and nursing communities and for their potential to help shape and implement the healthcare system of the future. Supporting allied health professionals and making allied health services accessible will ensure that Australia has an integrated, comprehensive healthcare system that delivers world class care.

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The investment of \$3 million to undertake a Scope of Practice Review is welcomed, and we are pleased to see both registered and self-regulated practitioners included. Morris Donovan says “This measure could unlock allied health capability to the benefit of all consumers.

“If the review demonstrates models of care where allied health professionals add capacity to an already stretched system and we can secure an accompanying funding mechanism, then this task holds real potential to improve the performance of the healthcare system.”

AHPA also welcomes the \$47.2 million over five years to trial integrating services and explore the use of joint commissioning across primary health, disability, aged care, and veterans’ care sectors. With appropriate implementation, this could significantly improve access to services, including allied health, in rural and remote locations and First Nations communities in up to ten locations.

Finally, we are very disappointed that no funding has been allocated to develop an allied health workforce strategy. There is still no nationally consistent collection and integration of allied health workforce data. This results in fragmented, inconsistent approaches to workforce and service planning.

The resulting impact is poor access to essential allied health services, especially for people in rural and remote areas, and those with chronic conditions. Implementation of these reforms without adequate workforce planning is counterproductive and burdensome for professionals and consumers.

AHPA looks forward to working with the Government to create a proactive, sustainable health system where consumers are informed, empowered, and prioritised.

AHPA CEO Bronwyn Morris-Donovan is available for comment. Please direct media inquiries to Suzie Medhurst – Communications Manager 0448958682

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