

4 August 2022

The Hon Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Cc The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Assistant Treasurer
Dr Stephen Kennedy, Secretary to the Treasury
Dr Brendan Murphy, Secretary, Department of Health and Aged Care

Dear Treasurer

Submission on the Government's October Budget: Health and Wellness

I am writing to you in advance of the October Budget to set out the issues that are important to CHF, our members, and health consumers broadly. CHF has had strong engagement with the Minister for Health and Aged Care, and his Department, and looks forward to building and maintaining strong relationships to inform and contribute to health care policy and delivery.

CHF welcomes the commitment to delivering wellbeing Budgets in future and looks forward to participating in consultations measurement and delivery. As part of that process, I hope that you will consider establishing a Wellness Advisory Council with a broad and representative membership, that can offer ongoing advice on measuring policies against agreed markers of progress. Importantly, with cost of living pressures and outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic adding to the struggles of the most disadvantaged in the community, CHF hopes that the Government will take an initial step towards improving the wellness for Australians who most need support. This could be achieved by raising the rate of JobKeeper and related government income support payments, increasing support for social and other housing options, and addressing other social determinants of health.

CHF understands the economic pressures faced by the Government, and that this Budget will focus on delivering election commitments and adjusting previously committed measures. CHF welcomes those commitments, including nation building reforms, with implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Voice to Parliament at its centre.

I would, though, like to reinforce the importance of health care reform in this and future Budgets. The commitment of an additional \$1 billion to primary health care is a great start, and will deliver key reforms to strengthen Medicare, such as urgent care clinics and voluntary patient registration. More will be needed over the life of the National 10 Year Primary Health Care Plan and National 10 Year Preventive Health Strategy.

Consumers shaping health

Earlier this year, the Primary Health Network (PHN) Cooperative and CHF co-hosted a summit, attended by all PHNs, peak medical and primary health care organisations, clinicians, researchers and consumers. The attached Roadmap was developed and agreed by all participants, setting out the path for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to work together and properly fund a system to deliver affordable and equitable access to person centred, high quality health care.

It is important, too, to strengthen the community sector, the capacity for peak bodies to consult and advise the Government, and to develop consumer leadership skills in the community. Funding under the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies program has declined in real terms over recent years and, with high inflation rates now affecting operations, indexation of current grants is needed in the short term.

CHF looks forward to the Government's first Budget and to contributing health consumers' perspectives to the measures announced and policies and programs that may be considered in the future.

Yours sincerely



Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer

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Consumers shaping health