

Election 2016: Putting Consumers at the Centre of Health Care How the Parties Stack Up

How CHF has rated the Parties

CHF identified seven key policy areas in its 2016 Election Platform. Across these, we called for 31 key commitments from Australia's political parties which would lay the groundwork for a sustainable health system that ensures people get the right care, at the right time and at the right cost.

We invited the Coalition, Labor, and Greens to respond directly to our reform commitments. As of 27 June 2016, only the Labor Party has done so. We indicated to all parties our intention to publish their responses alongside our appraisal.

We have collected statements made by the parties during and in the months prior to the 2016 Federal election campaign and compared them to our calls for reform. Here's how CHF rated the Parties' positions:



Where a party made an explicit commitment in-line with CHF's platform, we scored their position as having **MET** ours.



Where a party made a statement that is supportive of CHF's platform, but without making an explicit commitment to reform, we scored their position as **SUPPORTING** ours.



Where a party failed to make any apparent statement supporting CHF's platform, or made a statement in opposition to CHF's platform, we scored their position as having **MISSED** ours.



10 Platforms Met
6 Platforms Supported



11 Platforms Met
13 Platforms Supported



15 Platforms Met
5 Platforms Supported

Primary and Integrated Health Care

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Increase investment in primary health care</i>			
<i>Remove the freeze on the Medicare rebate</i>			
<i>Commit to the trial of the Health Care Home model of primary care</i>			
<i>Connect services through an electronic records system</i>			
<i>Invest in primary health care research</i>			
<i>Fund PHNs to introduce regional, integrated care</i>			
<i>Establish integrated care across all health settings</i>			
	2 of 7 Platforms Met	2 of 7 Platforms Met	4 of 7 Platforms Met
Overall	3 of 7 Platforms Supported	5 of 7 Platforms Supported	2 of 7 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

We welcome the acknowledgement by all parties that primary health care, particularly for people with complex and chronic conditions, is ripe for reform and innovation. They have all made some commitments in this area. All committed to implementing some form of patient centred health care home, including the funding reform that must accompany that. However, there was variation in pledges around a research agenda and the need to invest in the role Primary Health Networks could play in integrating primary care across multiple domains of health services. Commitments around the Medicare rebate freeze remain a major point of difference between the major parties. We are concerned that an extended freeze will be an impediment to the take-up of patient centre health care homes. Also lacking are commitments to ensuring use of My Health Record by GPs and specialists to guarantee consumers get the greatest benefit.

Private Health Insurance

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Develop a national standard for hospital cover (MyCover)</i>			
<i>Improve consumer information about insurance policies</i>			
<i>Redesign the Rebate to exclude non-evidenced procedures</i>			
<i>Maintain current system of community rating</i>			
	3 of 4 Platforms Met	2 of 4 Platforms Met	2 of 4 Platforms Met
Overall	0 of 4 Platforms Supported	2 of 4 Platforms Supported	0 of 4 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

We have welcomed the Coalition’s statements following the review of private health insurance about its intentions to make health insurance more transparent, affordable, and meaningful for consumers. While we appreciate Labor’s statements to restrain premium increases and exclude “junk” policies from rebate eligibility, we desire a more ambitious reform approach. We will continue to advocate to the next government a full adoption of our MyCover reform for private health insurance. The Greens’ plan favours abolishing private health insurance in order to more fully fund the public health system, and so oppose just reforming private health insurance.

Out of Pocket Costs

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>No new or additional co-payments</i>			
<i>Index increases in existing co-payments to inflation</i>			
<i>Create a single safety net across PBS and MBS items</i>			
	0 of 3 Platforms Met	2 of 3 Platforms Met	0 of 3 Platforms Met
Overall	0 of 3 Platforms Supported	0 of 3 Platforms Supported	1 of 3 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

Our expectations in this policy area are clear: that there will be no new co-payments introduced by the next government. That only Labor made that firm commitment was a disappointing outcome. We believe consumers would greatly benefit from reform of safety nets to keep procedures and medicines affordable, and urge the next government to explore merging Medicare and PBS safety nets.

Health System Efficiencies

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Complete the current MBS review</i>			
<i>Reinvest savings from MBS review into the health system</i>			
<i>Improve end-of-life care to reflect consumer preferences</i>			
<i>Introduce measures of patient experiences and outcomes</i>			
<i>Examine reasons for health care variation</i>			
	1 of 5 Platforms Met	2 of 5 Platforms Met	4 of 5 Platforms Met
Overall	2 of 5 Platforms Supported	1 of 5 Platforms Supported	1 of 5 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

We would seek stronger commitments from the Coalition and Labor on making patient experiences and outcomes core performance measures for the health system, and reinvesting savings from the MBS review back into the public health system. While we welcomed the Parties' acknowledgment about variations in healthcare across Australia, we would have liked to have seen greater commitment to examine and address the causes behind variation when they are revealed.

Mental Health

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Promote continuity between hospitals and communities</i>			
<i>Build on PHNs to implement locally planned mental health</i>			
<i>Include mental health and chronic pain in Health Care Homes</i>			
<i>Develop a ten-year suicide prevention strategy</i>			
<i>Implement 12 large-scale, regional mental health trials</i>			
	3 of 5 Platforms Met	3 of 5 Platforms Met	2 of 5 Platforms Met
Overall	1 of 5 Platforms Supported	1 of 5 Platforms Supported	0 of 5 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

We were pleased to see greater commitments to mental health care reform from the parties. Our reservation is that while the parties have made commitments about improving mental health care in either the hospital or community settings – or both – there has not been as much attention paid to the transitional, coordinated care needed between hospitals and the community. It was pleasing to see intent across the board to give Primary Health Networks a leadership role in stewarding better integrated mental health solutions at the regional level. We seek assurances that the Networks' will be given an appropriate suite of performance measures from which government and stakeholders can evaluate the impact of their newly assigned commissioning roles.

Oral and Dental Health

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Introduce dental care into Medicare</i>			
<i>Commit to Australia's National Oral Health Plan</i>			
<i>Restore the Child Dental Benefits Schedule</i>			
<i>Fund a National Oral Health Promotion Strategy</i>			
	1 of 4 Platforms Met	0 of 4 Platforms Met	2 of 4 Platforms Met
Overall	0 of 4 Platforms Supported	3 of 4 Platforms Supported	0 of 4 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

Good oral health correlates directly with good primary care. We are disappointed that there has been relatively little attention paid to oral health in this election and fewer funding commitments. That being said, Australia's National Oral Health Plan, announced by COAG earlier this year, may be a step forward if properly funded. We welcomed Labor's statement to us that they envision universal dental coverage in the future, and applaud the Greens' desire to expand Medicare to include dental coverage.

Preventive Health

<i>We called for...</i>	The Coalition	Australian Labor	The Greens
<i>Fund preventive health to 5% of health spending by 2020</i>			
<i>Additional support for family, childhood preventive health</i>			
<i>Tax sugar-sweetened beverages and change alcohol taxation</i>			
	0 of 3 Platforms Met	0 of 3 Platforms Met	1 of 3 Platforms Met
Overall	0 of 3 Platforms Supported	1 of 3 Platforms Supported	1 of 3 Platforms Supported

Our commentary

Overall we were disappointed by the lack of explicit commitments from the big parties to investments in evidence-based preventive health in the areas we had assigned priority, particularly a spending target for prevention. While Labor announced a welcome comprehensive package addressing the risk factors for chronic disease, all parties neglected to acknowledge the evidence of investing in the early years. It's been repeatedly shown that one of the best ways to improve population health and reduce health expenditure pressures is interventions that promote childhood development, health and wellbeing.