



1 May 2022

Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer
Consumer Health Forum
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Dear Ms Wells,

I write in response to the Consumer Health Forum's (CHF) Election Platform. Please find below the Australian Labor Party's response to the key areas you have raised.

Yours sincerely

Paul Erickson
National Secretary
Australian Labor Party

Questionnaire: Consumer Health Forum

Primary Health Care:

Since the Liberals have been in Government, it is harder and costs more to see a doctor. The results of deliberately running down Medicare and general practice end up in the local hospital – with people presenting at emergency departments because they have no alternative.

Almost a decade of Liberal neglect means that primary care is in crisis, particularly in outer suburbs and regional and rural communities.

Demand for healthcare is skyrocketing – we need more GPs, and better access to other health care professionals. Without this, it is going to get even harder to see a GP, and the fees you pay once you do get in will be even higher. And it is only through fixing primary care that we will take the pressure off our hospitals.

Labor will deliver at least 50 [Medicare Urgent Care Clinics](#), to take pressure off our emergency departments.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics will make it easier for Australian families to see a doctor or a nurse when they have an urgent, but not life threatening, need for care. Medicare Urgent Care Clinics will bulk bill, meaning there will be no out-of-pocket costs.

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics will be based in existing GP clinics and Community Health Centres and provide bulk billed services delivered by doctors and nurses – in every state and territory. This includes treating sprains and broken bones, stitches and glue for cuts, wound care, insect bites, minor ear and eye problems, and minor burns. All important and time-critical treatments that don't need a hospital emergency department.

Australia is experiencing a severe shortage of GPs in outer-metro and regional areas. People are struggling to see a doctor and waiting months for appointments.

In 2019, Scott Morrison's government made a bad situation worse by making more cuts – cuts that meant some regions of Australia are now banned from hosting the overseas trained doctors and doctors in the bonded medical program that once served their communities.

Now, practices are closing or sitting empty because they can't find GPs, yet they're told by the Morrison Government they can't recruit doctors the same way they used to.

This is irresponsible at the best of times – but cutting off GP access during a global pandemic and a GP crisis is inexcusable.

All Australians deserve access to universal, prompt, and world class medical care, and no one deserves to face a multi-year wait for vital treatments simply due to the cost.

Preventative Care:

Lifestyle is a powerful determinant of people’s health. Labor will therefore support policies that promote wellness and prevent disease – for every Australian, including the poorest Australians. Australians deserve the best possible environments and support to improve their lifestyles, including through exercise, better diets, preventing and giving up smoking and reducing harmful use of alcohol and drugs.

Living healthier lives will reduce the incidence of chronic disease, which is one of the greatest threats to Australia’s health and health system. We will support and encourage evidence-based health promotion and education, including through helping people better prevent and manage chronic conditions. We will also invest in programs and research that furthers our ability to prevent and manage chronic disease.

Labor supports the *10 Year Preventative Health Strategy* released in December 2021, and the *10 Year National Obesity Strategy* released in March 2022. An Albanese Labor Government would support the implementation of both Strategies.

Improved Access To Health Services:

Labor built Medicare. Australians know they can trust us to keep Medicare safe and strong, and to put the health of our people first. Cutting Medicare is in the Liberals’ DNA. You can never trust the Liberals on Medicare. Labor built Medicare and we will always protect it. An Albanese Labor Government would continue looking at opportunities to improve Medicare over time.

Health Consumer Participation – *call to establish an Australian Health Consumer Leadership Academy, continue the Youth Health Forum, and appoint a Youth Health Commissioner.*

Response: An Albanese Labor Government would welcome the opportunity to discuss the merit of this proposal further with the Consumer Health Forum.