



Consumers Health Forum OF Australia

<p>Board communique December 2023</p>

Dear Members

As 2023 draws to a close I would like to thank you for your continued support of CHF and its important work in advocating for improvements to health policy and delivery, especially at the Federal Government level.

At the halfway mark of the current financial year, I would like to update you, on behalf of the board of directors, on key programs of work the CHF team is undertaking including:

1. Continued advocacy around Strengthening Medicare initiatives

We continue to engage Members and consumers around the key reform initiatives including 60-day prescriptions, community pharmacy and scope of practice for health professionals. All these issues impact the effectiveness of Medicare for Australian health consumers, and we will continue to actively consult and advocate for meaningful reform. In the last two months alone, we have conducted surveys, roundtables and webinars to ensure we harness consumer views around these topics and provide the government with valuable input into policy development and service implementation.

CHF is really encouraged by the Australian Government's recent incentive payments encouraging more GPs to continue or reintroduce bulk billing. This incentive only began on 1 November, and we need time to see and properly assess what the uptake rate is by general practice and if this translates to improved access and care.

2. Fighting for more affordable and accessible primary care

Ensuring Australians can better access the care they need, when they need it and at an affordable cost is a fundamental principle that underpins all of CHF's advocacy. We believe people's ability to access healthcare shouldn't be determined by their bank balance and we continue to reinforce this message through our policy submissions, media relations and government relations. We are also seeing a rise in private health services promoted direct-to-consumer and we are quick to call out issues where we see safety and quality could be compromised by the drive for profits or convenience.



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3. Preparing our Pre-Budget Submission

A key piece of work currently in train is finalising our Pre-budget submission to be provided to Treasury in early February. While we have contacted some Members directly, we would welcome any Member organisation to provide input via email to our Director Policy & Research [Jo Root](#) around what your organisation sees as the key national health consumer issues for the upcoming years.

Looking ahead to the first half of 2024, exciting new activities will include:

- Conducting a National Consumer Sentiment Survey to be co-designed with consumers
- Delivering more value to our members through enhanced engagement
- Strengthening our relationships with state peak consumer bodies
- Continuing to promote Digital Health
- Improving our communications, especially social media campaigns
- Engaging with Members of Parliament on all aspects of our advocacy work.

As outlined in our 2022-23 [Annual Report](#), CHF is not only contributing to a more sustainable health system but is devoting considerable effort to strengthening the foundations of our organisation. As part of this, I'm pleased to report that the management team, capably led by our CEO Elizabeth Deveny, is close to completing the recruitment necessary to achieve our 2023-25 contracted deliverables and strategic objectives.

However, it is important to note that only the first tranche of CHF's \$3m funding for this financial year (as announced in the last Federal Budget), has been received. The key activities that this Grant will fund over the next four years have not been formalised. We know that many of our Members are keen to engage in this important work. We hope to be able to provide you with more detail early in the new year and look forward to working in partnership with you on these key initiatives.

I want to note that the CHF Board looks forward to welcoming our newest director, Adjunct Professor Darryl O'Donnell, who was recently elected by Members, to the CHF Board. Professor O'Donnell is the current CEO of Health Equity Matters, the national federation for the HIV community response, and Adjunct Professor with the Faculty of Medicine and Kirby Institute at the University of NSW. He brings a wealth of experience in health leadership roles in government and community settings at state, national and regional levels.

On behalf of the whole Board, I would like to wish everyone a safe and relaxing holiday season. The CHF office will be closed from 3pm on 22 December and will reopen on Tuesday 2 January.



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As Australia's national peak body for health consumers, CHF looks forward to working with you in 2024.

Kind regards

Tony Lawson
Chair