

Consumers Shaping Health

CHF
Consumers Health
Forum OF Australia



News and views on health consumer issues - December 2019



How 2019 has prepared us to advocate with impact

This year closes with Consumers Health Forum able to demonstrate a solid record of achievement. As we highlight in our [Report Card](#), we are more focused and prepared than ever to press for our health services to reflect the potential benefits of 21st Century knowledge when it comes to care and wellbeing in both urban and rural Australia.

Australia's Long Term National Health Plan states that the modernised health system will be more integrated, more efficient, more focused on patients and more equitable. Four pillars of reform are identified to achieve this including Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, supporting out public and private hospitals including through improvements to health insurance, prioritising mental health and preventive health; and investing in health and medical research.

Throughout the year CHF has moved on several fronts to ensure consumers can take a lead in shaping the changes we need to see. Our surveys have highlighted the need for more consumer enablement and leadership in chronic care, our *Shifting Gears* report set out goals for transformational change to deliver personal-centred and consumer-led care. We have developed Australia's first national Youth Health Forum and a Rural and Remote Special Interest Group to bring more effective attention to the needs to these communities.

We partnered with various organisations where we shared a common interest to the benefit of consumers. That's why we partnered with the Pharmaceutical Society to co-chair a National Medicines Safety Forum this month to recommend implementation priorities for COAG Health Ministers' Medicine Safety National Health Priority Area. Our health and wellbeing is so often all about our community. With more people experiencing chronic conditions that require coordinated multidisciplinary care across a range of providers, it is clear models of care need to adapt. We know that social determinants such as access to safe and affordable housing, education, employment and community connectedness have a significant influence on health and therefore linking with programs and services outside of the health system has the potential to improve health outcomes. That's why we partnered recently with the RACGP on a roundtable to bring forward recommendations for how social prescribing could become more commonplace and with ACOSS on the "Raise the Rate" campaign for Newstart.

With drought and bush fires engulfing so many rural and regional areas, health services have become even more pivotal for these communities.

Our surveys have produced findings which underline the huge scope for improved support for rural Australia, a need made more urgent by fire and drought.

Even before the fires took hold, rural people were pessimistic. A majority, 59 per cent, said they expected their access to care in their communities would worsen while around a third expected improvement. Many consumers noted that ageing will limit their ability to travel and this will have a significant impact on their access to healthcare.

Examples of what rural consumers would like to see include:

- Investment in rural specialist pathways for health professionals, including nursing and allied health and incentives to retain them in communities
- Better access to public dental services
- Funding public transport to facilitate access to health care and community activities
- Subsidies for healthy food and drink and restrictions on unhealthy food sales and advertising
- Education programs to support individuals to manage their own health and wellbeing
- Infrastructure to support effective telehealth and video conferencing in health settings
- Low or no-cost access to local infrastructure such as swimming pools, bike paths and walking trails to encourage active lifestyles.

This list is from rural consumers: a big list that adds to the many other agendas we will be advocating for in the year ahead where we find ourselves involved along with other national leaders in forums such as the 10 Year Primary Care Plan Steering Group, the National Preventive Health Strategy and the National Medicines Policy Working Group – all timely opportunities to shape health for the better.

We wish all of our members, supporters and stakeholders a happy Christmas and healthy New Year.

Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer

Medicines safety forum highlights need for strong consumer role



The 2019 year is ending on an encouraging note for stronger consumer involvement in tackling what is an all too-frequent challenge in health care: medicine safety.

More than 100 health leaders from throughout Australia attended the **Medicines Safety Strategic Stakeholder Forum** in Canberra on 9 December. The forum was convened by CHF, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA), NPS MedicineWise and academic partners Monash University and the University of Sydney.

Medication-related hospital admissions total 250,000 a year in Australia at a cost of \$1.4 billion; and 400,000 additional presentations at emergency departments are likely to be due to medication-related problems.

The cost and pain created by medicine errors is huge yet too often the part that consumers and patients should have in preventing this avoidable suffering has been overlooked.

The heartening news is that at the **Medicine Safety Forum** there was frequent mention by speakers and attendees highlighting the central role engaged and well-informed consumers should and could play in countering medication problems.

There is significant room for improvement in this pivotal part of health care. As the responses to CHF's [Australia's Health Panel](#) survey showed early this year, many patients report that neither their doctor nor pharmacist discussed their medication with them, nor provided them with a **Consumer Medicine Information** (CMI) leaflet. The vast majority of respondents, 91 per cent, said provision of CMIs by doctors and/or pharmacists should be mandatory. More than half of respondents said both doctors and pharmacists should be required to provide CMIs.

On a brighter note has been the sharp decline in use of **lower dose codeine** and related **emergency hospital cases** since these codeine products were "up-scheduled" to require a doctor's prescription. As the head of TGA, Adjunct Professor John Skerritt said, the change has been "remarkable".

That change did require active support from CHF and others in the face of fierce resistance from commercial interests. When we consider the disaster that widespread opioid medicine use has visited on the United States, we should not forget the part consumers can play in promoting quality use of medicines.

CONSUMER MEDICINE INFORMATION EXPLAINED

News and Resources

Collaborative Pairs- national program



CHF is launching a new phase of its pioneering Collaborative Pairs program. We are delighted to announce that applications are now open for the Collaborative Pairs Australia National Program to be held in Sydney, commencing February 2020.

Collaborative Pairs is a leadership development program which brings together a consumer, patient or community leader to work with a service provider, clinician or manager to develop new ways of working together. Each pair identifies a joint healthcare challenge or project that they are passionate about and will work on for the duration of the program.

The program, which originated in the UK, aims to develop partnerships and to break down the cultural barriers that often exist between those providing services and those receiving them.

Collaborative practice between the consumers and clinicians is an emergent area of health system management and service development, with broad reaching benefits and there is evidence of benefits to improving services, but better organisational cultures as well.

In 2019, CHF concluded a demonstration trial in an Australian context, with over 40 pairs participating. A literature review and an external evaluation of the trial has now been finalised.

[APPLY FOR THE NATIONAL PROGRAM](#)

Conferences & workshops



We are proud to announce our **1st Australian and New Zealand Consumer Experience and Leadership in Healthcare Summit** on 2-3 September 2020 at the International Convention Centre in Sydney.

The **CHF Summit 2020 - Shifting Gears** will offer both organisations and consumers who want to be at the forefront of system change the opportunity to [come together to explore](#), discuss and grow the concept and practice of consumer-centred care.

[Find out more](#)

Health fund premiums good news for now

The average 2.9 per cent increase in health insurance premiums will certainly be welcome news to consumers who have held insurance through years of above-inflation premium rises. The increase is the lowest in 19 years and reflects the efforts of Health Minister Greg Hunt to button down premium increases in the face of pressure from health funds for higher rises.

But will the bargain premium rises prompt health funds to squeeze the benefits they pay members? That was the scenario forecast by the industry when Labor proposed a two per cent cap on premiums before the election.

The Government has initiated some reforms including the tiered policies, discounts for young adults and lower prostheses costs. The planned website displaying specialist fees is expected to be introduced soon. Despite the changes so far, fund memberships have continued to slide and grow more lopsided with young people leaving while higher-claiming older people hang on. The Grattan Institute's Stephen Duckett has [published a report](#) proposed radical reforms to attract younger people.

CHF has welcomed the report as valuable contribution to the debate for a thorough review of health insurance. It seems unlikely that the latest restrained premiums will

provide a last solution to the woes of private insurance.

Details of premium increases for each fund are available on the website for the [Department of Health](#).

PREMIUM INCREASES BY FUND

Our data, our health



CHF has been working with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) on a National Primary Health Care Asset which will support a better understanding of what happens to patients in the primary health care system. The Data Asset will bring together various sources of primary health care data over time – including diagnoses, treatments and outcomes.

CHF formed a focus group and held two webinar panels, drawing on the experience of both consumers and health professionals to comment on the development of the Data Asset. A report on the project and access to the webinars is available on our website.

FIND OUT MORE

Pilot trial of anti-opioid drug, Naloxone

The Australian Government has this month launched a pilot program to trial free access to the drug Naloxone which can reverse the potentially lethal effects of opioids.

More than 1,100 Australians died from an opioid overdose or adverse reaction last year. To counter this the Government is investing \$10 million in the “Take Home Naloxone” (THN) pilot in NSW, SA and WA.

The pilot aims to provide people who may be at risk of an opioid overdose, or are likely to witness an overdose, with free and easy access to naloxone.

Naloxone will be available free to illicit and prescription opioid users, and anyone who is likely to witness an opioid overdose, from a range of sites including pharmacies, alcohol and other drug treatment centres, and needle and syringe programs

The pilot runs from 1 December 2019 until 28 February 2021.

MORE INFORMATION

Media Releases



Health sector unites to turn the tide on medicine safety

Better use of existing funding, leveraging digital health, empowering consumers and the workforce are among the keys to thinking and acting differently on medicine safety.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Value for money – time to rethink private health insurance

The latest report from the Grattan Institute highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive independent review of private health insurance.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Mission Australia's 2019 survey highlights the need for genuine youth engagement

Mission Australia's annual survey report shows that mental health is still the top concern for young people in Australia.

[LEARN MORE](#)



A new type of prescribing for Australian patients

CHF has partnered with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the NHMRC Partnership Centre for Health System Sustainability to host a roundtable on social prescribing in Australia.

[LEARN MORE](#)

[READ ALL MEDIA RELEASES & BLOGS](#)

Opportunities for participation - Special Interest Groups

CHF has established Special Interest Groups (SIGs) as a way to involve our members and the broader consumer community in shaping our policy and advocacy work so that it features even more consumer insight and perspective reflective of our Australian community.

We have created [two new opportunities](#) for you to be involved in helping shape health policy in Australia.

Primary Health Care Special Interest Group

Expression of Interest

Strong primary health care is central to an efficient, equitable and effective health system. The Australian Government has committed to the development of a 10-Year Primary Health Care Plan and which is an opportunity to develop a more coordinated, comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to primary health care in Australia.

The Primary Health Care Special Interest Group will allow us to better include voices of consumers in our advocacy and policy work relating to primary health care, including CHF's involvement in developing the 10-Year Primary Health Care Plan.

Expressions of interest can be [submitted on our website](#). If you have questions, please contact our Senior Policy Officer, Lisa Gelbart on l.gelbart@chf.org.au

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY](#)

Research & Data Special Interest Group

Expression of Interest

How and why consumers can be involved in research is a growing area of interest for CHF. We are conducting more research projects of our own which we would like to do with greater consumer involvement.

Consumer participants in the Research and Data SIG will identify what in health research matters to consumers, where improvement can be made, and contribute to the cultural changes needed among researchers, academics, analysts, policy makers and the wider research and data community that are needed for sustainable improvements in consumer involvement in research. Through this group, CHF hope to provide a space for those interested in healthcare research and data to share information, communicate perspectives and workshop ideas to enact change.

Expressions of interest can be [submitted on our website](#). If you have questions, please contact our Research & Policy Officer, James Ansell on j.ansell@chf.org.au.

[READ MORE ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY](#)

Join us!

As a member of CHF you will be kept up to date on key health reform issues through our publications and member alerts. CHF membership enables you to influence the national health agenda by contributing to CHF surveys and polls, consultations and campaigns. Members can draw on CHF position statements, media releases and policy submissions to inform your work and advocacy.

[BECOME A MEMBER](#)



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