



18 June 2014

Dear Senator

As a Member of Parliament, you have no doubt heard from your constituents about the difficulties they and their families face in meeting the out of pocket health care costs, particularly if they are older, have a chronic illness and/or are on low incomes.

As part of our work to represent health consumers, we at the Consumers Health Forum of Australia have sought the views of our member network to unearth consumer stories about co-payments. The result of this survey work is compelling.

You will be aware that CHF opposes the proposed Medicare co-payment. We believe it is vital that already existing high health care costs are kept in mind when Parliament comes to consider the proposed \$7 Medicare co-payment.

As part of the debate on the proposed co-payment, it is critical that you are aware of what typical Australian health consumers are saying about the impact of out of pocket costs RIGHT NOW, even before any new \$7 co-payment.

I urge you to take a few moments to read the report <http://tinyurl.com/le9z9tu> about the responses we received from 583 consumers who participated in our survey.

We know that Australians already pay among the highest out of pocket costs of any nation, a fact underlined by the New York Commonwealth Fund's international health survey released this month. It finds our health system scores well on most indicators but rates poorly in terms of cost barriers to care --- ninth out of 11 developed nations.

The introduction of a further slug on patients is unreasonable and unfair.

We strongly support any boost to medical health research. But to finance that from a new impost on the chronically ill and those on low incomes is unfair, particularly when the proceeds from the sale of Medibank Private are a much more suitable funding source.

Decisions about health care should be made on the basis of health need, not the ability to pay.

Thanks for your time.

Adam

Adam Stankevicius
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER