

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 18 January 2017

Congratulations and welcome to Minister Hunt

The Consumers Health Forum today welcomed the appointment of the Hon. Greg Hunt MP to the position of Minister for Health.

“The Health portfolio is currently in the midst of a wide range of changes and reforms, and we look forward to engaging with the new Minister to progress these important issues”, CHF’s chief executive officer, Leanne Wells said.

“It is clear that the community values the current health system – particularly our current universal public health insurance scheme - and wants all Australians to have access to quality health services. We understand that reform is necessary if the system is to be sustainable and continue to meet community expectations.”

“We encourage the new Minister to recognise the value and place of Medicare as many voters do. Well-managed changes to modernise Medicare and make it fit-for-purpose for the 21st century will include both costs and savings and must include steps to ensure quality and equitable healthcare. Balancing health system priorities will not be easy and we recognise the fiscal challenges in ensuring Medicare continues to offer realistic benefits for patient care.

In our 2017 Federal budget submission we outline consumers’ priorities for health. We commend it to the Minister as a guide for consumers wants and needs in his new portfolio”

“It is time for a National Vision for Australia’s Health 2025 and for the government to move away from the current budgetary requirement for all new health expenditures to be offset by savings in the health portfolio.

We also suggest that action is taken in the following five key areas for consumers: prevention, primary health care, private health insurance, pharmacy and patient safety and participation.

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Consumers shaping health



Investment in primary health care needs to be increased, firstly by removing the freeze on the MBS rebate for primary health care and by embedding patient centred health care homes and Primary Health Networks in our system.

The Private Health Insurance rebate needs to be targeted in the best interests of taxpayers and consumers. Policies that do not meet criteria of reasonable cover, simplicity and comparability should not be eligible for the rebate.

The new health payment system announced late last year should be funded to enable it to administer the PBS safety net, which currently relies on consumers and pharmacists keeping pen and paper records.

Australia needs a comprehensive, community-focused strategy to address the growing issue of obesity in Australia. This strategy should comprise elements including: a tax on sugar sweetened beverages, stronger controls on junk food advertising, improved nutritional literacy, healthy work environments and urban planning which encourages more physical activity.

"We look forward to working with the new Minister to move from a process of review to pushing forward with implementation and to ensure consumer's needs are front and centre in his new portfolio", Leanne Wells said.

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