



MEDIA RELEASE

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Health competition welcome if there is real choice

Consumers would welcome more competition among health and hospital services where there is a real choice, but often little choice is available, the Consumers Health Forum, says.

A Productivity Commission report released today says that greater competition, contestability and informed user choice could improve outcomes in many *but not all* human services.

The Commission has prioritised six areas of human services including public hospitals, end-of-life services and public dental services where it says outcomes could be improved both for the people who use them and for the community

“The Commission says reform in these areas could offer the greatest improvement in outcomes for users and CHF believes that more openness about the performance of hospitals and health services would be good for users and taxpayers,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

“As the report states, informed user choice puts users at the heart of services and recognises that in general the service user is best placed to decide what services meet their needs.

“However in the Australian setting, choosing public hospitals, end-of-life services and public dental care is in reality often limited by the few or non-existent choices of service available.

“The report says that introducing greater competition and contestability and informed user choice can improve the effectiveness of human services.

“While there may be a choice of comparable public hospital services available in the big capital cities, that is not the case elsewhere and the scarcity of choice is even more so when it comes to public dental and end-of-life care.

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Consumers shaping health



“Resourcing for these areas is limited and the immediate contestability issue they face is contesting for funds from scarce Government resources.

“We agree that more publicly available information about performance will help consumers make informed choices.

“While contestable approaches for local hospitals and the primary health networks are a positive move, they will be of limited value if there is not a realistic level of funding to make these services viable.

“It would be backward step if the outcome was that private sector took over lucrative areas while other services languished.

“Already we see the emergence of two-tiered health care where those with subsidised private health insurance are able to access services sooner while the majority of taxpayers have to wait,” Ms Wells said.

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