

Health care access Australians' top concern

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The top priority Australians give to good health care and public hospitals should remind our political leaders that there is still much to be achieved on the health front, the Consumers Health Forum says.

A national survey commissioned by the authoritative CEDA organisation shows that Australians rate reliable, low cost health services as the most widely important personal issue, and high quality and accessible public hospitals as the most widely important national issue.

"It is telling that after 25 consecutive years of economic growth, Australians are giving top priority to low cost and accessible health services," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"As the report says one interpretation of the survey results is that as a prosperous, advanced economy, the nation can afford and should provide these services. But the report also says another interpretation might be that with out of pocket health costs having doubled in the past decade to more than \$29 billion, the community appetite for even greater self-reliance is waning.

"The results of CHF's own *Out of Pocket Pain* survey indicate to us that many Australians support equitable access to a public health system and are concerned that many people can no longer afford the prompt care they need.

"The report also found strong support for other separately cited elements of health care, including affordable, high quality chronic disease and mental health services, and high quality and choice of aged care services.

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Consumers shaping health

“We believe there is a strong case for more government support for primary health care to ensure people have access to health services in the community for those living with chronic disease.

“In contrast there was noticeably less importance given to private health insurance and private hospitals.

“Given the continuing problems of cost and uncertainty many Australians are experiencing with health insurance, the federal government should be prepared to initiate a deeper review into government assistance to the private sector,” Ms Wells said.

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