

MEDIA RELEASE

Helping young people get the best of health

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Health concession cards to help young people afford health care is one of several steps urged by a report for the Youth Health Forum which has found the challenges facing young Australians include that nearly half experience high psychological stress and cost barriers to care.

The report [*Life Transitions and Youth Pathways to Health Services*](#) has made five recommendations to the Federal Health and Education Ministers for measures to improve health service access for young people including supports to navigate the health system and health concession cards for individuals aged 14 to 22.

The Youth Health Forum report was produced by the Consumers Health Forum and the Wellbeing Health & Youth (WH&Y) NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence,

A spokesperson for the Youth Health Forum, Roxxanne MacDonald, said the report showed there was a unique opportunity to establish health for life by equipping young people with the tools they needed to get help when they need it, and by supporting young people to speak up about how they can live their healthiest possible lives.

“As the report says, there are many challenges to designing youth-friendly healthcare services that are accessible to all young people, but some of these stand out as areas that we can address here and now.

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“Perceptions of care, both positive and negative, are set up during this time of transition when young people are more likely to struggle accessing and navigating our complex health system.

“The Youth Health Forum was created to make our voices and experiences as young people part of the national conversation on health and social services” Ms MacDonald said.

“A total of 1,416 young people completed surveys and 35 young people participated in in-depth interviews over 12-months.

“While most participants rated their health as being ‘good’ or ‘excellent, almost half reported high or very high psychological distress. The young people in the studies identified multiple barriers to accessing health services, with cost being at the top of the list.

“Based on evidence developed by the WH&Y Centre of Research Excellence team, and in consultation with YHF young leaders, six key challenges were identified, workshopped and ultimately used to form the basis of recommendations for improving youth pathways into health services in Australia,” Ms MacDonald said.

These challenges were: Trusting healthcare services, Transitioning to adult healthcare, Navigating the healthcare system, Delivering digital health care, Building a more equitable system and Developing health literacy.

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The challenges underpin the recommendations to the Federal Government for the measure to support young people's access to health care:

NAVIGATION SUPPORT: When young people move into the complex adult health system, it is difficult to navigate and the Government should fund a national nurse navigator program alongside hospitals to support and empower young people when they transition into the adult health system.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS: Affordability is a challenge for many young people, particularly as they transition from adolescence and reliance on parents into adulthood. Besides a concession to improve access to bulkbilled services, young people should have autonomy to receive 10 no-gap psychology services.

DIGITAL HEALTHCARE DELIVERY: Consumers should have access to health services, referrals, prescriptions and notifications via telehealth, phone, email or text and this should be supported with relevant MBS items.

YOUTH AGE CONSISTENCY ACROSS JURISDICTIONS: Young people experience challenges in accessing health services due to their age as they can be classified differently between health services across States and Territories.

INCLUSIVE DELIVERY: Access to health services from Culturally And Linguistically Diverse young people is heavily dependent on their ability to access Translating and Interpreting Services and there are opportunities to improve these services for us and our communities

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The CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said youth health was different from health at other ages.

“In youth, there is a unique opportunity to establish health for life by equipping young people with the tools they need to get help when they need it and support them in living health lives. To realise this opportunity, to turn it into reality, requires a shift in thinking away from negative stereotypes about young people and a commitment to move beyond ‘business as usual’.

“We need to reinvent young people’s healthcare, remove the stigma and inequity that prevents them from getting the support they need, and instead champion their strengths and their insights.”

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