

Happy birthday Medicare but are you still with it?

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Medicare is nearly 40 years old and it's time to have a rethink of our much-valued universal health care insurance scheme.

What aspects of Medicare do you think work well and what needs improving? These are two of the questions we pose in our short [Australia's Health Panel survey](#) out today.

"Medicare was established 38 years ago on 1 February 1984. Since then, it has played a crucial role in enabling people get the care they need. Also since then much has changed in healthcare," the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

"When Medicare began health care tended to be more focused on episodic care of acute one-off conditions requiring prompt but short-term care.

"The rise in chronic illness, significant improvement in the effectiveness of medications and treatment and population ageing have all dramatically changed the demands on doctors and the health system.

"The challenge for Medicare now is to ensure patients and doctors are supported over longer periods and doctors are rewarded in line with outcomes.

"Medicare is still largely focused on "12-minute medicine" that fails to reward GPs especially for the time and attention needed for more protracted cases.

"The difficulties in primary care are discouraging many medical graduates away from general practice, while the rising cost of specialist care is deterring many people from seeking the higher level of attention they need.

"We have commissioned the brief survey to help us gather the community's view in advocating for continuing reform to meet today's realities," Ms Wells said.

"Our survey will take just a few minutes but will help us argue for the changes needed to preserve Medicare."

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