

Put Aussies at the centre of health policy: call from consumer health advocates

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The Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) is urging all political leaders to put consumers at the centre of health policy-making in Australia, following the release of concerning [new data](#) from the Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development (OECD).

The benefits of consumer-centred care are better targeted services, and value-based health care, which translates to better outcomes for patients and less waste.

In Patient Experience Week (#PXweek22), CHF is calling for consumers to be placed at the heart of health system design.

“Health consumers embedded at every stage of health system design is a key component of patient safety, as well as ensuring patients are informed and have choice in their care or treatment,” CHF CEO, Leanne Wells said.

“The best interests of health consumers can be overlooked when well-resourced health providers press their claims for more health dollars,” said Ms Wells.

“We urge the new government to ensure that health spending puts the interests of patients and consumers first,” she said.

“There is a real opportunity for the next government to be a leader in primary health reform.”

As the Federal Election gets underway, CHF has called for the establishment of an Australian Health Consumer Leadership Academy, which will put people at the centre of decision making of health policies, not as an afterthought or a box ticking exercise.

“The pandemic has highlighted the importance of community trust in public health policy making,” Ms Wells said.

“Australians have become acutely aware of the impact of changing health policies and what that means for them.”

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The recent data from the OECD supports the need for a people-centred approach to health policy decisions, revealing that the patient voice remains “*weakly embedded in decision-making processes.*”

The report states: “*policies to address COVID-19 paid little attention to the needs of people-centred health services, especially in the early phases of the pandemic.*” It also noted that people are increasingly seeking control over their health information to make better informed decisions.

This evidence all points to one thing: a lack of human-centered design in health policy.

Ms Wells said there is strong evidence a person-centred approach works as it is already being used effectively in the United Kingdom and Canada.

“Building competent, capable and credentialled consumer leaders is internationally recognised as essential to driving positive change in the health system and it should be embraced by all political leaders.

“This is the missing piece in Australia’s health care policy development right now – but it can be easily fixed by the next Australian Government.

“That’s why we are calling on all sides of politics to commit to establishing an Australian Health Consumer Leadership Academy to skill up health consumer leaders, as well as to offer and promote training and development in consumer and community participation and involvement to policy makers, researchers, health administrators and service providers. Combined with the national peak body functions served by CHF, this will bolster our efforts to put Australians at the centre of health policy development.”

As well as calling for an Academy, CHF is urging the next Australian Government to implement a range of reforms to strengthen the health care system in Australia.

To find the CHF Election Platform, visit: <https://www.chf.org.au/publications/chf-election-platform-2022>

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