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Leanne Wells
Chief Executive Officer
Consumer Health Forum

Dear Ms Wells,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia's election priorities. Having reviewed your materials, we have chosen to respond to some of the questions and areas that are interrelated in the same response. Where they do not clearly correspond we have responded to them separately.

What measures will you put in place to ensure access to healthcare is determined by health need not capacity to pay?

The Australian Greens recognise that out of pocket costs are significant problem for patients and for the broader health system. We are the only major party to have consistently opposed the Medicare freeze, and have a plan to re-index all Medicare rebates.

We also have a \$3.5 billion plan to reform primary health care, which would provide additional support to GPs who provide care for people with chronic illnesses and provide additional funding of \$750 in additional funding for allied health per voluntarily enrolled patient. This additional support, which would complement existing MBS items, will help reduce out of pocket costs in general practice for people who have ongoing health issues. This measure is described in more detail in the primary and integrated care section, below.

As explained further below, we will invest \$3.5 billion over the next four years to make Medicare-funded dental available to all Australians by 2025. In the next four years we will make it available to: all children under 18 years; all aged pensioners; all people on the full rate of benefits including Newstart, youth allowance, carers payment and the disability support pension and all other concession card holders.

In addition, we will reform the way that the broader health system is funded by stopping the cost shifting between the Commonwealth and States once and for all by investing \$970 million in a Single Funding Agency, based on the independent national health authority outlined in the Australian Health and Hospital Association's Blueprint for a Post-2020 National Health Agreement.

What measures will you put in place to ensure that we have a sustainable health system that encourages high value and discourages low value care and ensures all Australian have access to similar care?



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There are a range of inefficiencies in the health system which need to be addressed, including low value care. We support the principles of regional flexibility, coupled with rigorous evaluation and reporting frameworks. We will commit to stopping the cost shifting between the Commonwealth and States once and for all by investing \$970 million in a Single Funding Agency as described above. In addition to this major initiative, we will make the health system more sustainable by:

- Reinvesting the \$6.5 billion (and rising) of taxpayers' money from the private health insurance rebate into the public health system because this investment of taxpayers' money has never been demonstrated to be a sustainable or equitable investment.
- Reforming Medicare to meet the needs of the millions of Australians living with chronic disease through additional funding for GPs and voluntary enrolment to provide coordinated care. This measure is described more below.
- Investing \$3.5 billion over the next four years to make Medicare-funded dental available to all Australians by 2025 (described in further detail below)
- Establishing an independent Preventive Health Commission with a clear focus on rolling out evidence-based prevention programs, so we all live healthier, happier, longer lives (described in further detail below)
- Supporting clear and transparent disclosure of all fees, charges and out-of-pocket costs, including the gap between health costs and private health insurance rebates.

Patient leadership

The Greens want to encourage greater public participation in our democracy. We will legislate so that government decision-making bodies, advisory bodies and community consultation processes require consumer groups and citizens to be represented at the table in a meaningful way. We will implement trials for:

- Citizen assemblies and juries to complement Parliamentary processes on big decisions;
- Participatory budget making, where more people have the opportunity to have a meaningful say when governments determine how to invest and raise revenue;
- Petitions which reach a threshold of support to trigger a real debate in parliament.

In addition to this, we strongly support greater funding for specific health consumer initiatives. We would ensure the two new organisations that we will establish, the Single Funding Agency and the Preventive Health Commission, are guided by consumers alongside health professionals. We would support the development of the Patient Leadership Academy, the scale-up of the Collaborative Pairs Australia program and the other programs outlined.

With regard to young people specifically, the Australian Greens are committed to listening to young people and ensuring that their voices are heard, as well as helping to amplify the voices of young people on issues that matter to them. We will reinstate the funding that the Coalition government has slashed to National Youth Week and the national youth body. We will establish a Federal Minister for Youth and we will give 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote.





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Primary and integrated care reform

Coordinated and integrated health care is critically important to a well functioning health system. Within the new Single Funding Agency we would establish a National Centre for Health Care Innovation and Improvement. This Agency would work with existing structures, including PHNs, to create a more equitable and efficient healthcare system. The new Centre would, as per your suggestion, support system stewardship by testing and scaling up new models of care and payment systems that work for patients, build capacity in the commissioning work of PHNs and their co-operation with LHNs, and spearhead national efforts to support the development of clinical and consumer skills in leadership, change management and improvement science.

As mentioned above, the Greens have a \$3.5 billion plan to reform primary health care. This new mixed funding model will transition primary healthcare services for people with chronic illnesses to an outcomes focused model and start to move beyond fee for service. It will reward value not volume and will help facilitate primary health care professionals being appropriately compensated for activity and meeting agreed performance standards and outcomes. This trial would build on some of the positive lessons learned from the trial of Health Care Homes. An initial trial of this system would provide services for up to 1 million Australians, 500 000 with chronic physical illnesses and 500 000 with chronic mental illnesses. The current GP payment system would be reorganised, with \$1000 payments available to GP practices per enrolled patient to compensate doctors for delivering high quality chronic disease care. This would be facilitated through the gradual phasing out of MBS items for physical health assessments and chronic disease management plans for the physical health stream and mental health treatment plans for the mental health stream. Fee for service arrangements would be maintained for all other items.

No specific conditions would be prescribed, but would include for the physical health scheme: obesity, asthma, kidney disease, cancer and stroke. Examples for the mental health scheme would be depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia.

Patients who choose to voluntarily enroll in this scheme will have access to \$750 of allied health professionals through Primary Health Networks in addition to existing allied health funding available through the MBS. The specific practitioners who are eligible for this scheme will be determined by Primary Health Networks and GPs. Each PHN or participating GP practice (dependent on the number of participating practices within a PHN network) would commission a range of practitioners to provide services for the scheme, in accordance with the profile and needs of their patient cohort and available practitioners. The integration of shared-decision making, social prescribing, supported self-management and a service coordinator workforce would be considered in this model.

The Australian Greens support the development of a primary health care data set for better service planning and improvement. We will be supporting a substantial increase in funding for research and development, including health research. Our overall goal for this investment is 4% of GDP over time. We will be making further comment about this closer to the election.

The Australian Greens support providing funding for pharmacists to be embedded within healthcare teams, particularly in residential aged care facilities. A range of mechanisms should be considered for this to be achieved, including the removal of professional service delivery funding from the Community Pharmacy Agreement.

Finally, we support continued funding for a sustainable My Health Record System that aligns with community privacy and ethics standards.



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Prevention in place

The Australian Greens will ensure that there is a national and whole of government approach to prevention to reduce known causes of chronic diseases such as obesity by investing \$196 million in the next four years, and \$54 million per year ongoing, to establish an independent Preventive Health Commission with a clear focus on rolling out evidence-based prevention programs, so we all live healthier, happier, longer lives.

Key tasks of the Preventive Health Commission will include:

- Implementing a comprehensive, evidence-based strategy to combat obesity including all of the recommendations of the Tipping the Scales report,
- Banning all advertising and sponsoring of junk food, alcohol and gaming/betting companies at sports events and during sports broadcasts; and
- Tackling the harms of alcohol including a dedicated campaign to raise awareness of the harms of alcohol and drinking during pregnancy, in order to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

This Commission will also:

- Develop a Prevention Plan to 2030 that increases expenditure to five percent of total health spending within the next term of government.
- Increase investment in family and early childhood programs to ensure healthy behaviours start early, including strategies to tackle childhood obesity.
- Invest in data, training, tools and resources that help health providers to support patients becoming active managers of their health. This should include the ability to write 'social prescriptions' to encourage people to reach out to support like health coaches or community groups
- Ensure patient resources are supported by a framework and review process that aids in identifying high quality, evidence-based information and tools e.g. digital applications.

Patient activation, self-management and health literacy

The Greens will help Australians become more confident and skilled in managing their own care and navigating the health system by:

- Reforming primary health care as described above. This will encourage health professionals to work in a collaborative manner, and support consumers to be more involved in their healthcare by moving away from a fee for service model. This will include elements of the Prescriptions for Living model outlined in your paper.
- Creating the Single Funding Agency outlined above which will dedicate regional funding to ensure consumers are involved in commissioning, designing and providing consumer training to local services and PHNs
- Strongly consider investing in consumer reviews of health information to ensure resources and program information is consumer-friendly, comprehensive, and easy to find.



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Social determinants of health

The Greens support health being a key decision making factor in all areas of policy. Our commitment to universal health care includes recognising the significance of all stages of life, from early childhood to aged care. Our 2019 election platform includes a range of initiatives which will support Australian's health, including:

- Immediately raising Newstart and Youth Allowance by \$75 per week and bring back the Parenting Payment Single
- Guaranteeing access to essential community services including social services, disability services, mental health services and aged care
- Abolishing punitive measures including income management and work for the dole
- Establishing a Federal Housing Trust to fund the building of 500 000 public and community homes
- Implementing a national standard for renters' rights and increasing funding for tenancy advice services
- Creating a new ten-year, \$5.3 billion National Partnership Agreement on Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women between State and Territory Governments
- Invest in public education, including making uni and TAFE free

We recently launched a dedicated initiative to increase rates of breastfeeding and support mothers to provide feedback about their experiences of birthing in hospitals, which demonstrates our commitment to the early years. We have also launched our aged care policies, which include over \$8 billion of additional investments towards ensuring Australians have access to high quality, safe and affordable aged care.

The Australian Greens recognise that with rising rates of chronic illnesses like obesity, diabetes and heart disease, we must find ways to keep people healthier throughout their lives rather than just treating illnesses once they have them. A critical element of this is an appreciation of the social determinants of health, and for First Nations people also cultural determinants of health.

We would strongly support the initiation of a National Wellbeing Dashboard to enable tracking of current and future wellbeing. This Dashboard would be one of the tasks of the Preventive Health Commission.

Our commitments regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health are outlined in the below section.

Finally, we support the reinvestment of government investment in private health insurance into the public health system.

Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

The Australian Greens are committed to addressing Australia's unfinished business through treaties, truth, justice and healing. We strongly support working with First Nations peoples to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We acknowledge that treaties are a vital pathway to recognising sovereignty and achieving meaningful reform for First Nations peoples.



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We are providing \$50 million to First Nations peoples' organisations to support a path towards establishing treaties. We are also providing \$50 million for the establishment of a body to enable agreement-making, such as the Makarrata Commission, and facilitate a process of justice and truth telling. Following the implementation of these priorities, the Greens are providing funding for the consultation and referendum process to establish a Voice to Parliament.

Following the introduction of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, over \$500 million was cut from First Nations programs, including more than \$169 million of cuts to health programs. The Greens will restore this funding and work to ensure that this restoration is led by communities.

The Greens are committed to working with communities and health professionals to design targets and interventions for diseases, such as Rheumatic Heart disease, trachoma and chronic otitis media, that are more prevalent in First Nations communities.

The Greens will invest \$15 million per year to close the gap in the rates of new HIV diagnoses between Australian-born non-indigenous peoples and First Nations peoples. This funding will be used to ensure the needs of all First Nations peoples, including brotherboys, sistergirls and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are met in public health prevention and service provision.

We are also investing in research which is controlled and led research by First Nations peoples. The Greens provide in principle support for increased funding for First Nations controlled and led research, either through the MRFF or National Health and Medical Research Council and will be investing more money in research and development.

Oral and dental health

The Greens will invest \$3.5 billion over the next four years to make Medicare-funded dental available to all Australians by 2025. In the next four years we will make it available to: all children under 18 years; all aged pensioners; all people on the full rate of benefits including Newstart, youth allowance, carers payment and the disability support pension and all other concession card holders. Under our scheme, people will be eligible for \$1000 over two years for essential dental care. These people will still be able to choose their dentist, while having the costs covered by Medicare.

Support for early childhood, youth and family

The Greens believe in empowering young people. That's why our 2019 election platform includes:

1. Reinstating funding for National Youth Week as this festival promotes young people's current contribution to the community and cultural life. It is also an opportunity for young people to engage in their communities.
2. Reinstating funding for the national youth peak body - Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) at \$2 million per annum.
3. Establishing a Federal Minister for Youth. The Greens will return the Youth portfolio and minister, to ensure that the rights and needs of young people in Australia are being discussed, promoted, prioritised, and looked after.



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4. Giving 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote and to have a say in their own future. We will also increase flexibility in enrolling to vote, allowing voters to register and vote on polling day.
5. Making each voice count in the political process. The Greens will ensure that everyone has a fair say in our political process and that our representatives are accountable to us, not big political donors.

The Australian Greens are committed to listening to young people and ensuring that their voices are heard, as well as helping to amplify the voices of young people on issues that matter to them.

We will support children, families and young people to have the best start in life by reforming primary healthcare and investing in First Nations health initiatives as outlined in the above sections. Our single funding agency will facilitate PHNs providing positive parenting programs, such as the right@home program. We have also announced a plan to invest \$15 million

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Consumer Health Forum's questions. I look forward to continuing to work with you to progress these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Senator Richard Di Natale

Leader of the Australian Greens & Senator for Victoria



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