



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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BLAME GAME: NO ONE WANTS TO STOP IT

“The widely publicised arguments between the Victorian State and Federal Governments earlier in the year about hospital funding are a clear reflection of the fact that the ‘Blame Game’ around health funding has not been addressed by supposed health reforms”, said Mr Bo Li, spokesperson for the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance (AHCRA) today. “ Governments need to work much harder at simplifying the funding systems. They are too focussed on their own political interests, not the health of the whole nation.”

What is the problem?

“Funding for health services in Australia comes from Federal, State, and Local Governments, private individuals, and insurance companies. Whenever there is a funding shortfall in a part of the health system, the various governments claim they are not responsible” said Mr Li. “Even experts have difficulty working out who should be held accountable. Transparency is absent.”

“In addition duplication of services and bureaucracies is commonplace and estimates of the cost of this range from \$1–4 billion per year, Rod Wilson, an AHCRA executive member added. “Service providers such as community health centres often have up to 50 different sources of funding and spend valuable resources just getting the funds to provide care. Services are fragmented and patients and relatives have to negotiate a minefield to get different services that are needed.”

What are the consequences of not addressing the issue?

“We will continue to see governments running away from their responsibilities to organise and fund our health system and look after the increasingly complex needs of patients”, said Dr Tim Woodruff of the Doctors Reform Society. “The game will continue. Politicians will pretend they care. The media will be busy. Patients will suffer quite unnecessarily”.

What can be done?

“It is time to revisit previous discussions regarding alternative funding models, said Mr Li. “ A pooling of state and federal health spending and distribution to states or regions on the basis of need (population and burden of disease) by an independent body would lead to the end of the blame game and a dramatic increase in accountability.”

* AHCRA advocates for a fairer health system. It is a coalition of about 30 national and state peak health groups, including those representing the medical profession, nursing, allied health, the rural health sector, as well as consumer groups.

This is one of a series of media releases on the key health issues AHCRA believes urgently need fixing in the current health system. AHCRA is seeking commitment to the necessary action from the major parties in the coming election.

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