



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

C/- PO Box 280 Deakin West ACT 2600 ABN 64 051 645 674
www.healthreform.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

29 March 2017

Labour Health Summit sets the agenda

The Australian Healthcare Reform Alliance (AHCRA) today welcomed Labor's response to its Health Policy Summit and called on all political parties to use the priorities identified by the Summit to further develop health policies leading up to the next Federal election.

AHCRA is a coalition of peak health organisations working together to create a better and fairer health system for Australia's future.

"Labor's willingness to consult with stakeholders on health policy issues is welcomed. Health care is an important priority for the Australian community with demand for health services increasing, due to the ageing of our population and other factors," AHCRA Chair Jennifer Doggett said today.

"Clearly this will require a re-think of the resources we commit to health care and the way in which they are allocated. For example, there is at least \$2.5 billion in savings available annually through reductions in spending on pharmaceuticals, hospital care, and health technology assessment. There is a further \$7-9 billion annually spent on private health insurance rebate and over \$300 million spent on avoidable public hospital care which could be re-allocated more efficiently.

"Addressing the social determinants of health should be a high priority for the current and future Federal Government. Social determinants, such as employment status and geographic location, play a crucial role in influencing people's access to health care and overall health status. We cannot ensure that all Australians get a fair go with health care without taking social determinants into account.

"It is also important that we structure our health system to work as efficiently as possible. International evidence shows that the most efficient health systems are those with a strong and preventively-focused primary health care system. It is almost always more cost-effective to prevent the development of a chronic condition than to treat the symptoms once it has progressed.

"AHCRA recommends that improving our primary health care sector should be a high priority for saved funds. This includes supporting primary health care professionals to provide preventively-focused, comprehensive care and addressing the needs of groups who currently experience barriers to accessing care, such as Indigenous Australians, people with mental illnesses and those in rural and remote communities.

"AHCRA looks forward to working with all stakeholders and political parties in the development of policies that will improve the equity and efficiency of our health system," Ms Doggett said.

For further information or comment: AHCRA Chair, Jennifer Doggett, 0403 325 980

**AHCRA is a coalition of health groups, including consumer, provider and service delivery organisations, working together to improve the health system for Australia's future.*