



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

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MEDIA RELEASE

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TIME TO MOVE ON FROM 'DRUGS AND DOCTORS'

The Australian Healthcare Reform Alliance (AHCRA) today called on the Government to move beyond its 'drugs and doctors' focus in the Budget to address the broader health challenges facing the Australian community.

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

"AHCRA welcomes the restoration of funding to Medicare, the PBS and public hospitals, noting that most of the money allocated in the Budget to these programs is simply replacing what previously had been removed from these programs by the Coalition," AHCRA Chair Jennifer Doggett said today.

"We also welcome a number of Budget initiatives, such as funding to address rheumatic fever in Indigenous communities, for veterans' mental health services and to support young people with Type 1 Diabetes. The funding for primary health care research networks is also a positive but it will not replace the loss of expertise and data from longstanding programs such as BEACH, PHCRIS and APHCRI.

"However, despite some positives, overall we are disappointed that the Government has taken a very narrow approach to health and engaged with only a small number of stakeholder groups in the development of the Budget initiatives.

"Drugs and doctors are clearly important parts of our health system but they are not the major factors that determine the health and well-being of our population," Ms Doggett said.

"We are concerned that key groups who will be impacted by Budget decisions, such as consumers, people with chronic illnesses, Indigenous people, people in rural and remote areas, appear to have been left out of the consultation process. Also, the Government has clearly ignored other health professional groups such as nurses, dentists and allied health workers.

"We call on the Government to now move beyond measures to placate the high profile stakeholder groups and address the fundamental issues impacting on the efficiency and equity of our health system, such as rising co-payments, fragmented services and inequitable access to care.

"A good place for the Minister to start would be to spend as much time talking to consumers and other health sector stakeholders as he has spent negotiating with a handful of high profile pharmaceutical and medical organisations," Ms Doggett said.

Further information or comment: 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.*

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