

# Media Release

May 11th, 2010

## Budget Delivers High Strike Rate on Health



Today marks the real start of action towards genuine health reform according to Carol Bennett Executive Director of the national peak consumer health body, the Consumers Health Forum.

"The Federal Budget is the real litmus test of government commitment to health policy because we know that what gets funded usually gets done. After months of political wrangling, we now know from the budget figures that the Rudd Government has a strong commitment to health reform.

Ms Bennett was commenting on the release of the Federal Budget details showing that health will receive a boost of \$7.3 billion over five years to fund major new health reform initiatives.

"The practical impact of many of these new programs will be to take pressure off our overburdened hospital system and provide a better range and choice of services at a local level," Ms Bennett said. The Budget has supported recommendations made by three major health reform reviews:

- National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission – 94 of 123 recommendations are supported.
- Primary Healthcare – all recommendations to be implemented.
- Preventative Health Taskforce – half of the recommendations to be adopted.

"That gives this Budget a high strike rate in following through on the views of consumers, health professionals and other experts who contributed to the three key health reviews," Ms Bennett said. The critical areas that CHF particularly welcome include:

- \$416.8m over five years for Medicare Locals (new primary health care organisations) and for better after-hours access;
- \$355.2m for new GP Superclinics;
- \$390.3m for practice nurses to assist GPs.
- \$449.2m over five years for diabetes programs.
- E-health - \$466.7m over 2 years to implement the NEHTA business case and introduce personal electronic health records by 1 July 2012.
- Hospitals – activity based funding \$163m; four hour emergency access targets \$500m
- Workforce - \$643m for training of health professions
- Prevention - \$131.8m for new initiatives including anti-smoking and binge drinking campaigns.

CHF also welcomes the \$15.4b Community Pharmacy Agreement that will fund pharmacy initiatives over five years, including a greater focus on consumer services.

"Ideally we would have seen an investment in dental health care – an area we know to be a key indicator of social disadvantage and associated with chronic health problems. CHF hopes to continue to work with Government to achieve this in the coming months.

“Other areas that need further commitment are indigenous health (some funds provided for substance misuse) and mental health (\$175.8m announced to date but extra funding for primary care and sub-acute care will also contribute to improvements in this area).

“Of course it will now be important to get the detail of this significant investment right – and that means consumers being involved in decision making at all levels of the implementation,” Ms Bennett said.

“Overall this is a good day for Australia’s health consumers who can find comfort in the fact that their health and that of their families will be better provided for into the future as a result of this significant investment. That’s an important legacy that puts Australia at the forefront in looking after its citizens,” Ms Bennett said.

**For further information please contact. Peter Logue – 02 61627504 or 0402 067 614**