

Media Release

Wednesday, 12 May 2021



**Allied Health
Professions
Australia**

2021 Federal Budget Response

Allied Health Professions Australia and its members have cautiously welcomed the 2021 Federal Budget's acknowledgement of allied health and investments in some key areas in which allied health plays crucial roles. However, there are significant aspects of the budget that fail to acknowledge the multi-disciplinary nature of allied health and its critical role in healthcare and aged care.

We welcome the \$700,000 funding for a gap analysis of allied health data. CEO Claire Hewat states 'Effective provision of allied health services cannot be achieved without comprehensive data which has been sadly lacking.'

AHPA will be working closely with the Australian government and the Department of Health to clarify the allied health impacts of the Budget measures and to ensure that the allied health sector is involved in their implementation.

Aged Care

AHPA welcomes the government's commitment to making changes to aged care in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission, including the replacement of the Aged Care Funding Instrument, the formation of an Aged Care Advisory Group, which will include allied health, and a Council of Elders and, and the investment in reducing the waiting list for residential home care.

The Royal Commission identified the crucial role of allied health care in both home care and residential aged care facilities, but found that currently there is limited access to such services. Lack of funding was an important factor in the gap in allied health provision. CEO Claire Hewat says 'Understanding the gaps in access to allied health in aged care is an important step in improving aged care for all. But to actually fill these gaps requires federal Budgets to reflect these strong recommendations from the Royal Commission and at this stage it is not at all clear that this is the case.'

The Budget also lacks the recognition that allied health is a sector which provides multi-dimensional care across all areas. Older people require a holistic approach to their health and wellbeing which addresses all facets of living. They often need allied health providers such as: exercise physiologists, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, psychologists, and speech pathologists.

Primary Health Care

After many years of campaigning, AHPA is glad to see the 14.2 million dollar investment into MBS case-conferencing for allied health. This is a significant step forward in creating an integrated approach to healthcare, but must be followed by improved access to allied health through Medicare and other primary care funding in the near future so that comprehensive care can be provided, especially to those least able to afford it, and not just talked about.

2 million dollars of funding has also been dedicated to primary care model trials. AHPA expects to be a part of this development and will update members accordingly.

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Rural and Remote

Positively, this budget has included investment into allied health professional training and staffing in rural and remote areas, including \$9.6 million to extend the National Rural Generalist Pathway. There will be 90 packages of funding for workers in rural and remote areas, including 30 packages for allied health assistants. However, while this is significant, it does not come close to meeting the current demands for allied healthcare provision in rural and remote areas.

AHPA acknowledges the federal Government's commitment and funding toward other aspects of the healthcare sector, including improving services and support for those with cognitive disabilities, and mental health reforms. We look forward to engaging in these initiatives.

In order for healthcare to be truly beneficial to the Australian public, all providers, including allied health, must be considered as a connected network of care, rather than remote individual providers, and the related budget should reflect this holistic approach.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 19 national allied health association members and a further 11 affiliate members with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 130,000 allied health professionals who work across the primary, acute and tertiary sectors in Australia.

AHPA believes it is vital that allied health professionals are recognised for their work alongside the medical and nursing communities and for their potential to help shape and implement the healthcare system of the future. Supporting allied health professionals and making allied health services accessible will ensure that Australia has an integrated, comprehensive healthcare system which delivers world class care. Please visit www.ahpa.com.au for further information about us.

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