



MEDIA RELEASE

Multidisciplinary Teams the key to unlocking Access to Primary Care

Friday 3 February 2023

Allied Health Professions Australia welcomes the release of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report today and supports the commitment of the Albanese Government to reform the primary care system, of which allied health is key.

Recognising the value of multidisciplinary primary care is long overdue. AHPA Chair and Taskforce member Antony Nicholas said “We encourage reforms that strengthen multidisciplinary team care and support funding mechanisms that allow allied health professionals to work to their full scope. However we caution that reform without an implementation roadmap and a commitment to engaging with the allied health sector will ultimately result in more of the same.”

AHPA is particularly concerned with the recommendation to increase investment in the Workforce Incentive Program (WIP). AHPA CEO Bronwyn Morris-Donovan says “There is no evidence that the employment of allied health professionals under the WIP has improved access to multidisciplinary care.”

“The allied health sector has opposed the WIP since its inception - it undermines the entire employment model of private allied health. The Government is taking a general practice incentive payment and calling it a win for multidisciplinary team care. It is a not a win for consumers or allied health. It shows there is still no real understanding of how to build a system that genuinely puts consumers at the centre.”

While AHPA strongly supports greater investment into PHNs to strengthen their capacity to commission allied health services, it should not be seen as a mechanism to ‘supplement general practice teams.’ We must move on from the notion that general practice is the only setting where primary care takes place.

There are thousands of allied health professionals working in the community in small private practices. The idea that bundling services under one roof is the antidote to fragmented care is fanciful. Coordinated care requires all parts of the primary health care system to work as a team, supported by appropriate resources, including connected digital technologies.

Although we welcome recommendations to modernise the My Health Record (MHR), allied health must be given access to, and considered in the development of all digital development. Morris-Donovan said “We must not forget that allied health professionals cannot contribute critical health information into the MHR, or choose suitable clinical information systems (CIS) that are interoperable with MHR.

“If Minister Butler is serious about improving continuity, quality and safety in health care, then bringing allied health into the digital ecosystem must urgently be addressed.

About Allied Health Professions Australia

Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) is a collegiate body consisting of 24 national allied health association members and a further 13 affiliate members with close links to the allied health sector. AHPA's members collectively represent over 150,000+ 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 that delivers world class care. Please visit www.ahpa.com.au for further information about us.

“As it stands, the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce digital recommendations offer no reassurance that allied health will be prioritised.”

Additionally, while AHPA is supportive of recommendations to 'fast-track' the supply and distribution of the health workforce, we caution how this can be achieved. “There is no consistent collection and integration of allied health workforce data. This means the Government cannot confirm vital information about allied health professionals and their roles, resulting in fragmented, inconsistent approaches to workforce and service planning,” says AHPA Chair Antony Nicholas.

“The impact of this is poor access to essential allied health services, especially for people in rural and remote areas and people with chronic conditions.”

Changes in funding and infrastructure to Australia’s health systems that allow for consumer-centered primary care and equity of access to all Australians needs to happen now.

Allied Health Professions Australia is committed to working with the Australian Government to deliver the Taskforce recommendations. The impact of these recommendations is far-reaching for the health of all Australians. A clear implementation plan is the next step to reform.

AHPA Chair Antony Nicholas and AHPA CEO Bronwyn Morris-Donovan are available for comment. Please direct media inquiries to Suzie Medhurst – Communications Manager 0448958682

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