



You may have noticed the Australia Government released the 2018 Budget this week. There were some major spending announcements in the area of health and aged care. We have collated some analysis of the health announcements for you.

**The Conversation** (<https://theconversation.com/budget-2018-boosts-aged-care-rural-health-and-medical-research-health-experts-respond-96100>) neatly summarised the budget announcements for health and aged care:

The government has announced A\$1.6 billion over four years to allow 14,000 more older Australians to remain in their home for longer through more high-level home care places. For those in aged care, an additional A\$82.5 million will be directed to improve mental health services in the facilities.

The budget includes A\$83.3 million over five years for a rural health strategy, which aims to place more doctors and nurses in the bush and train 100 additional GPs.

There's A\$1.3 billion over ten years for a National Health and Medical Industry Growth Plan, which includes A\$500 million for new research in the field of genomics.

Other key announcements include:

- A\$1.4 billion for new and amended listings on PBS
- A\$302.6 million in savings over forward estimates by encouraging greater use of generic and bio similar medicines
- A\$253.8 million for a new Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

The Conversation also published analysis of these announcements by leading health policy and health economics academics. Some key points made by the experts include:

- *Aged Care:* - The A\$1.6 billion for 14,000 new places for home-care recipients will be welcome, but are a drop in the ocean, given there are currently more than 100,000 people on the national priority list for support.
- *Equity and prevention* - There is nothing in this budget to address growing out-of-pocket costs that limit the ability of many to access needed care.

## AGED CARE

Peak bodies cautiously welcomed the announcements and spending on Aged care

As well as the spending on access, the Government also announced a range of measures targeting quality of care:

- New Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission with strengthened regulation



- Enhanced coordination and an improved ability to identify and respond to failures in quality
- \$50m to support residential care providers transition to new quality standards
- Greater transparency in quality of aged care through introducing performance rating
- Palliative care (\$32.8m) and better care for people living with dementia (\$5.3m)

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**Leading Age Services Australia**, representing aged care providers welcomed the \$50m to assist residential aged care providers to transition to a new quality standards framework

<https://lasa.asn.au/news/aged-care-budget-a-step-in-the-right-direction-but-much-more-work-to-do/>

**Council of the Ageing (COTA)** welcomed the extra home care packages and other welcome aged care measures will provide relief for older Australians

<https://www.cota.org.au/news-items/media-release-extra-home-care-packages-welcome-aged-care-measures-will-provide-relief-older-australians/>

## RURAL HEALTH

**Rural Health** was a big item in this year's budget. The Stronger Rural Health Strategy is a \$550 million investment to support improved rural health services. This includes a new Workforce Incentive Program will provide some funds to general practices to employ more nurses, doctors and, for the first time, allied health workers.

The **Workforce Incentive Program** provides financial incentives to support general practices to employ nurses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers/Practitioners and allied health professionals in multidisciplinary and team-based primary health care across Australia.

Around 5,000 practices and more than 7,000 medical practitioners will be eligible for incentive payments under the Workforce Incentive Program. Funding will strengthen team-based and multidisciplinary primary care and support practices to employ allied health professionals, including non-dispensing pharmacists, in all locations.

The National Rural Health Alliance described the Workforce Incentive Program as "It's the first step in increasing the very low numbers of allied health workers in rural and remote areas,"

<http://ruralhealth.org.au/media-release/rural-health-budget-welcome-not-enough>



## MENTAL HEALTH

**Mental Health** was the other big ticket item in this health budget, with \$338million in new investment focussing across three key areas – suicide prevention, older Australians and mental health research. Peak body **Mental Health Australia** welcomed the increase in funding for mental health. <https://mhaustralia.org/media-releases/mental-health-australia-welcomes-new-mental-health-investments>

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE HEALTH PROFESSIONAL?

The **Australian College of Nursing** focussed on the impact on the nursing workforce:

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) supports the investments that have been announced in tonight's Federal Budget, particularly those designed to strengthen Australia's valued nursing workforce.

Initiatives funded include:

- 3,000 extra nurses to improve the health of people living in rural, regional and remote areas;
- Exploring nurse models of health care delivery that can provide primary health care to support the nursing workforce;
- An independent review of current nursing preparation and education which will explore improvements to the system and consider factors that affect nurses entering the nursing workforce;
- Funding for frontline service delivery by nurse practitioners; and
- \$20 million for a mental health nurse led service focused on reducing mental health impacts of social isolation for Australians over 75 years of age.

<https://www.acn.edu.au/publications/media-release/australian-government-health-budget-2018-19>

**The Pharmaceutical society of Australia** described the announcement of the Workforce incentive Program that will allow general practices to engage allied health professionals including non-dispensing pharmacists as:

“A win for patients through improved quality use of medicine outcomes, a win for the pharmacy profession through a new sustainable career pathway, and a win for government through return on investment in primary care” <https://www.psa.org.au/media-releases/budget-supports-general-practice-pharmacists>

**Australia Medical Association** described the budget as ‘Safe and Steady’ with a broad range of initiatives across the health portfolio. But also warned that some of the bigger reforms and the biggest challenges are yet to come. <https://ama.com.au/media/safe-and-steady-health-budget-bigger-reforms-are-still-come>