

Federal Election edition | 16 May

## Australian Labor: Review

The Australian Labor party has focused on health throughout the campaign. This has included several hospital announcements, such as that it would invest in a Better Hospitals Fund, a Medicare Cancer Plan and an emergency department funding package. These investments in developing hospital capabilities are supported by the VHA, with good quality facilities directly tied to the quality of care that patients receive.

Labor also announced a range of policies focused on ensuring that patients do not need to receive care in hospitals. This included a proposals for a preventative health package, encouraging greater care in the community through a Better Care Fund and new headspace Plus hubs. The VHA welcomes these initiatives, in support of managing demand of the health system in acute mental health services. The VHA, in particular, supports Labor's Community Health Renewal Fund. This investment means that community health services can not only meet the needs of growing communities but play an even greater role in supporting the broader health system. The VHA has campaigned for community health services to be supported through its 'Stand with Community Health' campaign, including calls for establish a dedicated community health service capital fund to ensure existing facilities can adequately support growth and continue to meet the needs of the community.

Labor also announced a Pensioner Dental Plan, which would enable pensioners and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders to access \$1,000 worth of dental services every two years, similar to the Child Dental Benefits Scheme. The VHA supports this extension, as oral health is an often overlooked component of healthcare, with a similar proposal part of the VHA's Commonwealth pre-budget submission 2019-2020.

## Coalition: Review

The Coalition's campaign on health has largely focused on the recently announced budget, and its success in the previous Parliament at adding new medicines to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The VHA notes the significant investment in health in the 2019/2020 Commonwealth budget, but the lack of a cohesive and forward-looking focus on reforming the health system is disappointing. Given the scale of the need and the flow-on impacts to other areas of the health system, the underinvestment in mental health is also disappointing as is the Commonwealth's failure to allocate any substantial funding to health prevention activities, despite the ever-increasing pressures on our health system of an increasing, ageing and generally unhealthier population.

There have been limited election health policy announcements from the Coalition aside from the Health and Medical Research Plan. This announcement included a number of funding commitments for Victoria, including \$80 million for an Australian Centre of Excellence in Cellular Immunotherapy at

Peter McCallum Cancer Centre, \$16 million to create eight new headspace centres in Victoria, and \$40 million will fund new paediatric emergency departments inside the existing emergency departments of Geelong, Maroondah, Frankston and Casey hospitals. Investment in Victoria health infrastructure is welcomed by the VHA, but the lack of a broader strategic approach means that these proposals, while beneficial to certain areas and services, are limited.

## Greens: Review

The Australian Greens have made a number of health policy announcements that have focused on system reform, which the VHA supports in addressing long-term healthcare issues. The Greens have predominantly focused these large-scale announcements on funding and prevention, which would benefit members in their demand management, although there is no information available on how it would impact Victoria.

The VHA was pleased, in particular, to see The Greens call for Medicare-funded dental, which would lead to public dental becoming available for all Australians. The VHA welcomes this announcement, as dental health has often been overlooked compared to other physical health issues, with public dental waiting lists in Victoria reaching nearly two years in certain places, which has a knock-on effect on the wider health system.

The focus on keeping people out of hospital was a core feature of the party's announcements, including establishing a Preventative Health Commission and instigating chronic conditions plan, which would look to ensure people with chronic conditions, including those with chronic mental health issues, do not end up in hospital. The VHA welcomes the support for reducing the burden on hospitals, either shifting care to suitable community locations or encouraging prevention of diseases.

Party	Announcement	Proposal Area	Funding	Known Victorian funding	Members Impacted	Notes	Source
Coalition	Funding heart health checks by GPs through Medicare for five years	Prevention	\$170m		Would affect members that employ or work with GPs		<a href="#">SBS</a>
Coalition	Health and Medical Research Plan	Funding	\$496m	\$191m	Would affect a number of members across Victoria	Over 6 years, includes: \$80 million for an Australian Centre of Excellence in Cellular Immunotherapy, which would provide CAR-T therapy. \$16 million to create 8 new headspaces in Victoria. \$25 million investment in the Australian Clinical Trials Network's TrialHub. Hospitals in Rosebud, Casey and Bendigo in Victoria will be the first hospitals to partner with the TrialHub. \$25 million will help establish a new national Drug Discovery Centre. \$40 million will fund new paediatric emergency departments inside the existing emergency departments of Geelong, Maroondah, Frankston and Casey hospitals. \$32 million will be invested in a new medical Health Futures to be lead by Peninsula Health and Monash University. Ten new MRI licences will be available across Victoria, including at the Royal Women's Hospital and the Northern Hospital in Epping.	<a href="#">Greg Hunt</a>
Coalition	MBS items expansion for all ultrasound and diagnostic radiology services over three years from July 1 2020	Clinical	\$200m		Would affect all hospital members	Medicare rebates for about 90 per cent of all diagnostic imaging services will now be indexed.	<a href="#">Greg Hunt</a>
Coalition	Stage 1 of the redevelopment of Rosebud Hospital	Hospitals	\$5m	\$5m	Peninsula Health	Includes clinical trial hub for treatment of cancer and rare diseases.	<a href="#">Greg Hunt</a>
Coalition	Changes to PBS eligibility	Medicine	\$308m			The threshold to receive free or further discounted medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) would be lowered by 12 scripts for pensioners and concession card holders and the equivalent of 2 scripts for non-concession card holders.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>

<b>Coalition</b>	Aged Care Workforce Research Centre	Workforce	\$34m		Could impact members that deliver aged care	The Centre would examine new ways to deliver care for older Australians and training and education for aged care providers.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Clinical trials in rural and remote Australia	Rural and Regional	\$100m		Opportunity for rural and remote members		<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Mental health research	Mental health	\$22.5m		May impact members involved in child mental health	\$10 million will go to two research projects developing digital tools focussed on child and youth mental health.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	New services through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy	Indigenous	\$19.6m		May impact members involved in providing indigenous healthcare	\$12.5 million will support three projects which aim to provide the knowledge and understanding to make health programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people more effective.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	National trial of PainChek	Aged care	\$5m		May impact members involved in aged care.	A national trial of world-first artificial intelligence technology to reduce the pain suffered by people living with dementia	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Lymphedema support	Prevention	\$10m			Patients with lymphedema will get access to specialised, subsidised compression garments.	<a href="#">Greg Hunt</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	New maternity-to-home and wellbeing program	Prevention	\$36m		Would impact members delivering maternal services.	New check to boost perinatal support and tackle postnatal depression. The check-up will be available in 10 different languages, with \$16m going to the Centre for Perinatal Excellence for a digital screening tool. Another \$20m will go to the states and territories and service providers to ensure the check happens before a family goes home from hospital. This announcement comes on top of \$26m announced in the budget for a new Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program	<a href="#">The Guardian</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Australian Breastfeeding Association	Prevention	\$4m			To help support mothers and new research efforts, to assist in the support of the health of women and babies	<a href="#">Scott Morrison</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	New National Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network	Prevention	\$5m		Would impact members involved in women's health	Limited details available	<a href="#">The Guardian</a>

<b>Coalition</b>	Children's cancer research	Funding	\$9.6m		Monash Health	Funding from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research (EPCD) initiative will be provided to the Children's Cancer Foundation. \$4.8 million will fund the Hudson Monash Paediatric Precision Medicine Program. The remaining \$4.7 million will fund different research projects.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	National LGBTI Health Alliance funding	Mental health	\$2m			The funding is over over two years for the peer support telephone and online support service, QLife	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Seniors Connect Program	Aged care	\$10m		Would impact members delivering aged care services	Would combat loneliness. The program would work with local community groups, including schools and sporting clubs, as well as with grassroots organisations dedicated to supporting older Australians.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Little Dreamers funding	Community health	\$50,000		Would impact members that support child carers	The additional funding would be expected to support close to 300 Young Carers across Victoria and NSW	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Support for children with life threatening medical issues	Hospitals	\$5m		Would impact hospital members	Palliative Care Australia will be funded \$3.25 million to develop a national paediatric palliative action plan.	<a href="#">Liberals</a>
<b>Coalition</b>	Expansion of mental health services in Higgins		\$16.5m	\$16.5	Would impact members in the surrounding areas	New headspace will be established in Glen Iris and a \$13 million residential centre for treating eating disorders will be established through the South East Primary Health Network which covers the Higgins electorate.	<a href="#">Greg Hunt</a>
<b>Greens</b>	Homelessness initiative	Community health	\$500m		All members that work with homeless clients	\$500 million each year for 10 years to crisis services and transitional housing	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
<b>Greens</b>	Legalise cannabis for adult use	AOD			Members that provide AOD and connected services	Resources would be directed towards treatment. The plan will establish an Australian Cannabis Agency to issue licenses for production and sale, monitor and enforce license conditions and review and monitor the regulatory scheme. Strict penalties would remain for the sale of unlicensed or black market cannabis; the sale of cannabis to under age consumers and other breaches of license conditions	<a href="#">The Greens</a>

Greens	Medicare-funded dental	Dental	\$3.5bn		Would impact all members that deliver dental services	Investment is over 4 years, with Medicare-funded dental available to all Australians by 2025. In the next four years it will become available to: all children under 18 years; all aged pensioners; all people on the full rate of benefits including Newstart, youth allowance, carers payment and the disability support pension and all other concession card holders.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Preventative Health Commission	Prevention	\$196m		Would impact all members	Will focus on obesity and alcohol.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Single Funding Agency	Funding	\$970m		Would impact all members	Initiative to stop cost-shifting.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Chronic conditions plan	Prevention	\$3.5bn		Would impact all members	Will provide services for up to 500,000 people with chronic physical illnesses and 500,000 people with chronic mental health conditions each year.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Equal state and federal funding of public hospitals	Hospitals	\$2.8bn		Would impact all hospital members	This would lead to 50/50 funding between the levels of government.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Public hospital capital works grant fund	Hospitals	\$100m		Opportunity for hospital members	Funding would be provided on a competitive basis.	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Reinvestment of the private health insurance rebate	Funding	\$6.5bn		Would impact all members	Removal of the private health insurance rebate, with the funding redirected into public healthcare	<a href="#">The Greens</a>
Greens	Increased rural health support	Rural and Regional	\$180m		Would impact rural members	The Greens' plan includes: Developing a new National Rural Health Strategy Supporting the expansion of the national rural generalist pathway and investigating other professional pathways Developing a rural health workforce innovation funding Investigating increasing the rural and remote bulk billing incentive payment \$180 million in infrastructure and increased MBS expenditure over next three years in rural and regional areas.	<a href="#">Richard Di Natale</a>

Labor	To set up a permanent policy-making body, the Australian Health Reform Commission, which would address long-term healthcare challenges	Reform	N/A		All members would potentially be impacted	The commission would deliver advice to commonwealth and state ministers, as well as hold ministers accountable by reporting on progress on reforms. The commission's early priorities include reform of primary care to deal with an ageing population, rising chronic disease burden and improving access to public hospital specialists.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Funding heart health checks by GPs through Medicare for five years	Prevention	\$170m		Would affect members that employ or work with GPs		<a href="#">SBS</a>
Labor	Better Hospitals Fund 2019-2025	Funding	\$2.8bn		All members would potentially be impacted	Policy to fully reverse cuts by PM Turnbull in 2018. This includes \$1 billion in new capital projects, and \$250 million to target surgery waiting lists.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Expanding Medicare-subsidised access to diagnostic imaging	Infrastructure	\$80m		New licenses in Victoria: Mercy Health - Werribee Mercy Hospital Monash Health - Monash Children's Hospital	Boost the number of eligible MRI machines and approve 20 new licences – 500,000 more scans funded by Medicare over the course of a first Labor budget.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Investment in stillborn births	Prevention	\$5m		Will affect all members with maternity services	Will be informed by senate inquiry, but also includes: \$150,000 for National Stillbirth Strategy \$1.85 million for education campaign \$1.5 million for research for stillbirth with no known cause \$1.5 million for pregnancy monitoring app Supported by Coalition Government, but Labor will implement any items not delivered	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	National Ovarian Cancer Registry	Prevention	\$12m		Will affect all members that have oncology services	Creation of a National Ovarian Cancer Registry; support the development of the Australian Ovarian Cancer Study's tissue bank for research into prevention and treatment; and fund new clinical trials.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Monash-Peninsula Health Futures Hub	Clinical	\$21m		Peninsula Health	The Hub will focus on designing and delivering new, better integrated models of care.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Independent privacy commissioner	Infrastructure	N/A		Will affect members implementing		<a href="#">Catherine King</a>

	review of MyHealthRecord				MyHealthRecord		
<b>Labor</b>	Upgrade Dandenong Hospital	Hospitals	\$14.5m		Monash Health. Should also benefit surrounding members	Part of Labor's Fair Go Action Plan. Redevelopment of the hospital's outpatient and day treatment facilities for maternity, oncology, trauma, psychiatric and other specialist services.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
<b>Labor</b>	Domestic violence program	Family Violence	\$60m		Would impact all members that deliver domestic violence services.	Extends Victorian program nationally. Paid for through Labor's proposed banking fairness fund, a levy on banks for community improvement schemes.	<a href="#">The Guardian</a>
<b>Labor</b>	Cap private health insurance premiums	Reform	N/A			Increases capped at no more than 2 per cent for the next two years.	
<b>Labor</b>	Public hospitals to be required to provide abortion services	Hospitals	\$9.3m		All public hospital members	Will provide \$9.3 million for a national plan to improve access to abortion services and restore funding to the Australian Women's Health Network. This provision already exists in Victoria, but is facing a high court challenge Not all services will have to provide, but there must be a local option for patients. How this would work would be worked out with states in next hospital agreement next year. Catholic services will not be required to provide abortion services.	<a href="#">The Guardian</a>
<b>Labor</b>	End to Medicare rebate indexation freeze	Funding	\$213m		Would impact all hospital members	Rebates for about 100 GP items - including family counselling and mental health care - will resume going up in line with price rises across the economy. The freeze has been ending in stages since mid-2017, and is due to finish completely in mid-2020. The Labor promise is expected to finish the process a year early.	<a href="#">Labor</a>



Labor	Medicare Cancer Plan	Funding	\$2.3bn		Members that provide cancer care	Expansion of Medicare to cover the out-of-pocket costs for 145,000 people who are diagnosed with cancer every year.  The funding includes \$500 million fund to shrink treatment waiting lists for cancer patients in state-run hospitals. Labor has also promised to deliver an extra 6 million free cancer scans worth \$600 million and \$433 million to fund 3 million fully bulk-billed specialist consultations, along with a \$300 million capital works fund that includes \$60 million to build regional radiation centres.	<a href="#">Labor</a>
Labor	Community Health Renewal Fund	Community Health	\$40m	\$40m	All community health service members	Funding for Victoria's community health centres. The first four investments have been announced (EACH, Central Bayside Community Health, Star Health Prahran, Sunbury Community Health), but all community health services in Victoria will be eligible to apply for funding.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	Pensioner Dental Plan	Dental	\$2.4bn		Members that deliver dental services	Pensioners and Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders will be able to access \$1,000 worth of dental services every two years.	<a href="#">Labor</a>
Labor	Preventative health package	Prevention	\$115.6m		Would affect members that deliver allied health services	The package includes proposals for: A National Obesity Strategy Continued funding for the National Tobacco Campaign A National Alcohol Strategy Development of a first 1000 days program, with the creation of a new Chief Paediatrician at DHS	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	NDIS Future Fund	Funding	N/A		Members that deliver NDIS services	All NDIS funding to be guaranteed so no underspend can be repurposed.	<a href="#">The Age</a>
Labor	Investment in pathology tests	Funding	\$200m		Would affect hospital members	Lift the bulk billing incentive for pathology tests.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	New Anam Cara House	Palliative care	\$15m	\$15m	Would impact members in surrounding Geelong area	Both parties had promised the investment for the 2016 election.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>
Labor	headspace Plus hubs	Mental health	\$200m	\$48m	Would complement youth mental health services offered by metropolitan members	The services will focus on moderate mental health issues, where clients need further support but not hospitalisation. The funding includes \$144 million over four years to trial three metropolitan headspace Plus sites, with one in Melbourne.	<a href="#">Bill Shorten</a>

Labor	Emergency department funding package	Hospitals	\$250m		Would be an opportunity for hospital members.	The funding announcement was for \$500m, but half of the funding is coming from the Better Hospitals Fund. The package is split, with \$250m to upgrade hospital emergency departments, and \$250m to increase workforce.	<a href="#">The Conversation</a>
Labor	Better Care Fund	Community health	\$250m		All hospital members would have an opportunity to access the funding.	Will offer incentives for primary healthcare providers to deliver more care in the community, and reduce waiting times for specialists.  Money from the fund would also be used to incentivise hospital discharge and follow-up care to avoid unnecessary re-admissions.	<a href="#">Canberra Times</a>
Labor	More inpatient mental health beds at Casey Hospital	Hospitals	\$22.4m		Monash Health	This capital project will be funded out of Labor's Better Hospitals Fund.	<a href="#">Bill Shorten</a>
Labor	First Australians health package	Indigenous	\$115.1m		Would impact members involved in providing indigenous healthcare	Labor's plan will improve access to culturally appropriate health care by: Investing \$29.6 million in reducing youth suicide and poor mental health through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services \$33 million to address rheumatic heart disease \$13 million to Close the Gap on vision loss, including \$8.5 million for regional eye health coordinators \$20 million for sexual health promotion \$16.5 million to promote healthy choices \$3 million to target health awareness in at-risk communities.	<a href="#">Bill Shorten</a>
Labor	Establish a new Health Solutions Fund	Research	\$15.3m		Peninsula Health	Funding will go towards health technology initiatives in the Frankston-Peninsula region. Under the election commitment, a new health tech accelerator - PenStart - will be established, along with new simulation facilities at Monash University's Peninsula Campus.  The new fund will support the new technologies and care models developed through the Health Futures Hub.  The Fund is a partnership between Monash University, Peninsula Health, the Frankston Foundry and Labor.	<a href="#">InnovationAus.com</a>

Labor	New facility for Castlemaine District Community Health	Community health	\$5m		Castlemaine District Community Health	Not certain if funding is from Community Health Renewal Fund.	<a href="#">Castlemaine Mail</a>
Labor	Aged care program	Aged care	N/A		Members with residential aged care facilities would be particularly affected, as would members that offer home care services.	Labor has signalled support for improving aged care but has promised no funding. The proposals include: Investigate interventions to ensure older Australians most at need are prioritised for home care. Encourage 20,000 aged care workers to obtain or improve their qualifications through TAFE. Speed up implementation of the Matter of Care workforce strategy. Ensure at residential aged care facilities there is a registered nurse present at all times. Improve access to home care packages and increasing staffing levels and skills. Provide proper incentives for GPs to do home visits and provide services in residential aged care.	<a href="#">Bill Shorten</a>
Labor	Support Geelong-area hospital services	Hospitals	\$105m	\$105m	Barwon Health	The investment includes: \$40 million to redevelop Baxter House Hospital as an elective surgery centre. \$50 million to help establish the new Geelong Women and Children's Hospital. \$15 million towards the Torquay Community Hospital.	<a href="#">Bill Shorten</a>
Labor	Ballarat Innovation and Research Collaboration for Health initiative	Research	\$10m	\$10m	Ballarat Health Services	The research centre, which is seeking \$19 million to get off the ground, will bring together both of Ballarat's hospitals and six universities for medical research cooperation.	<a href="#">The Courier</a>
Labor	Box Hill Hospital upgrade	Hospitals	\$25m	\$25m	Eastern Health	This investment will be funded through Labor's \$2.8 billion Better Hospitals Fund. Labor's investment includes: \$10 million to build additional specialist consulting suites. \$5 million to commission a hybrid operating theatre. \$5 million for a new angiography suite. \$5 million for a PET scanner.	<a href="#">Catherine King</a>



<b>Labor</b>	Chinese aged care facility	Aged care	\$7.25m	\$7.25m	May impact members in the surrounding area	Federal Labor have matched Victorian Labor's funding pledge for a Chinese aged care facility in Springvale South.	<a href="#">Premier</a>
<b>Labor</b>	National expansion of 'Ready 2 Change' addiction program	AOD	\$13.5m			Would enable Turning Point to expand its 'Ready 2 Change' online and telephone counselling program, already available in Victoria, across the country, particularly those who are living in rural and regional areas	<a href="#">Sydney Morning Herald</a>