

Budget 2012-13: Health

May 2012

Health was a significant priority in the 2013-13 Federal Budget, with inclusions a combination of new initiatives and the extension and expansion of existing programs.

The most significant new initiatives were in area of dental health, and included reduction public dental waiting lists and increasing the capacity of the dental workforce. Dental reform was a feature of the Government's agreement with the Australian Greens, made when forming Government following the 2010 Federal election. In line with the agreement, the next phase of significant dental reform will be addressed in the 2013-14 Budget. The agreement is available [here](#).

Aged Care

In addition to the Health initiatives listed below, the 2012-13 Budget also included \$3.7 billion for the Governments *Living Longer Living Better* aged care reform package, more information about which can be found [here](#).

Regional and rural areas

The 2012-13 Budget will deliver 76 new regional health infrastructure projects across Australia. In 2012-13, the Australian Government will continue its focus on rural Australia through operation of Rural and Regional Health Australia (RRHA), which was established in 2011-12. The Government is providing \$475 million through the Health and Hospitals Fund to support clinical training capacity of regional hospitals, upgrade regional health infrastructure; and expand regional hospitals.

The key responsibilities of RRHA are to:

- provide accessible information to the public about Australian Government health and aged care programs in rural and regional locations;
- undertake ongoing stakeholder engagement; perform advocacy functions across government; and
- provide policy and service delivery advice.

The Australian Government will continue to deliver accessible and relevant information to Australians living in rural and remote areas through the RRHA website, free telephone number and email contact services. In 2012-13, through engagement with stakeholders, including industry groups and government, RRHA will increase awareness of the issues facing communities in rural and remote Australia. This will raise the profile of key regional, rural and remote health and aged care issues in policy development and program delivery.

Mental Health

In 2012-13, the Government will continue to implement the \$1.5 billion 2011-12 *Delivering Mental Health Reform* package. This significant investment, together with over \$600 million in other mental health initiatives, commits approximately \$2.2 billion over five years from 2011-12 to new and expanded mental health services. These reforms, being delivered by a number of Commonwealth and State and Territory agencies, include providing more intensive and better coordinated mental health support services, targeting support to where it is most needed, and helping early detection of mental health problems in young people. In 2012, the Government will also continue work to finalise the *Ten Year Roadmap for Mental Health Reform* which will set out the long-term reform agenda for the mental health system.

e-Health

The Government announced it will invest \$233.7 million to deliver its e-Health agenda including \$161.6 million to operate the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) system. The electronic health record system will allow patients online access to their health records from any participating health care provider, reducing the time taken to locate relevant information and ensuring doctors and clinicians have the information they need to provide effective care.

The Government will provide a further \$67.4 million as the Commonwealth's share of joint funding with the States and Territories for the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) work program for the next two years.

Bowel cancer

Commencing in 2012-13, the Australian Government will provide \$49.7 million over four years to expand the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program with people 60 years of age invited to participate in the program from 2013 and those 70 years of age invited to participate in 2015.

This will build on the existing program which currently invites people 50, 55 and 65 years of age to participate in free bowel screening.

This measure will implement five yearly screening under the program, followed in 2017-18 by the phasing in of biennial screening for Australians between 50-74 years of age. Commencing phased biennial screening in 2017-18 will enable sufficient time for the planned expansion of the program including the development of workforce capacity to meet the increased demand. Biennial screening should be fully implemented by December 2034.

Dental

The Government announced it will invest \$515.3 million in a dental health package. This includes \$345.9 million over three years to help reduce public dental waiting lists. A National Partnership agreement will be negotiated with States and Territories to provide treatment for an estimated 400,000 adults on public dental waiting lists, including supporting the Indigenous population. The funding will enable states and territories to supplement existing public services, including through the purchase of private dental services if necessary.



The Government will provide \$158.6 million over four years to increase the capacity of the dental workforce. This will include \$77.7 million over four years for grants to support the relocation of dentists to regional, rural and remote areas and to improve access to services beyond urban areas. Building on commitments announced in the 2011-12 Budget, the Government is expanding the voluntary dental graduate program by \$35.7 million over three years and introducing an oral health therapist graduate year program at a cost of \$45.2 million over four years.

The Government will provide \$10.5 million over three years to deliver national oral health promotion activities in consultation with key dental health organisations. This funding will be used to develop a National Oral Health Promotion Plan in 2012-13 to guide the implementation of evidenced based oral health promotion activities over the following two years.

Finally, the Government will provide \$0.5 million over three years to support the delivery of pro bono dental services by oral health professionals.

This funding will assist an organisation with the capability to coordinate the provision of dental services free of charge to priority groups, including concession card holders, Indigenous Australians, the homeless, women and children living in shelters and refugees.