

## MEDIA RELEASE

2 April 2019

### **Government continues to invest in healthcare in the lead up to the 2019 election**

“CHA welcomes the ongoing investment by the Government into the Australian healthcare system,” says Suzanne Greenwood, CEO of Catholic Health Australia (CHA). “The 2019 budget brings together many of the announcements that have already been made over the last few weeks allowing a fuller picture of the Government’s commitment to provide quality health services to all Australians”.

CHA welcomes the decision to grow Medicare funding by increasing the rebate for diagnostic services, including ultrasound and x-ray imaging. This follows one of the recommendations of the MBS review taskforce. The work of the MBS review taskforce is also to be continued.

Extra funding for cancer research in Victoria (\$500 million) and new drugs to be added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme are also incredibly important for many Australians fighting cancer.

“The strategy, again already announced, of improving transparency of out of pocket costs is a step in the right direction, as more information about specialist fees is essential for consumers to make such incredibly important decisions in their lives.”

CHA also welcomes the Government-led information campaign under development to better inform patients about what is covered in their private health insurance policies.

“The strong focus on mental health is necessary and encouraging with particular regard to the additional mental health services support for people affected by recent national disasters.” CHA recognises the importance of the continuation of the drug and alcohol strategy and the commitment to tackle opioid misuse.”

Further clarity has been released regarding the Medical Research Future Fund with a ten year plan detailing available funds and their areas of priority. CHA particularly applauds further investment in Indigenous health and medical research and in particular the continuing support for the Lowitja Institute.

Whilst the budget is undeniably positive overall for health, CHA highlights there are important areas for further investment that have been neglected.

“Access for all Australians, no matter where they reside, to quality palliative care needs to be made a priority by Government,” says Suzanne Greenwood. “Our recent report ‘[Palliative Care in the Catholic Health Sector](#)’ details the systemic funding and access issues which need to be urgently reviewed. Pockets of excellent innovation in delivering palliative care already exist and need to be available consistently at a National level”.

“CHA also believes that we need a strategic national health workforce plan to address the persistent health workforce shortages experienced, particularly in regional and rural areas - not only in the medical profession but nursing and allied health as well. The expansion of the national training program for rural generalists is a start, but it needs to be expanded to cover all aspects of the health workforce,” says Suzanne Greenwood.

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*CHA represents the largest single grouping of non-government health, aged and community care services in Australia.*

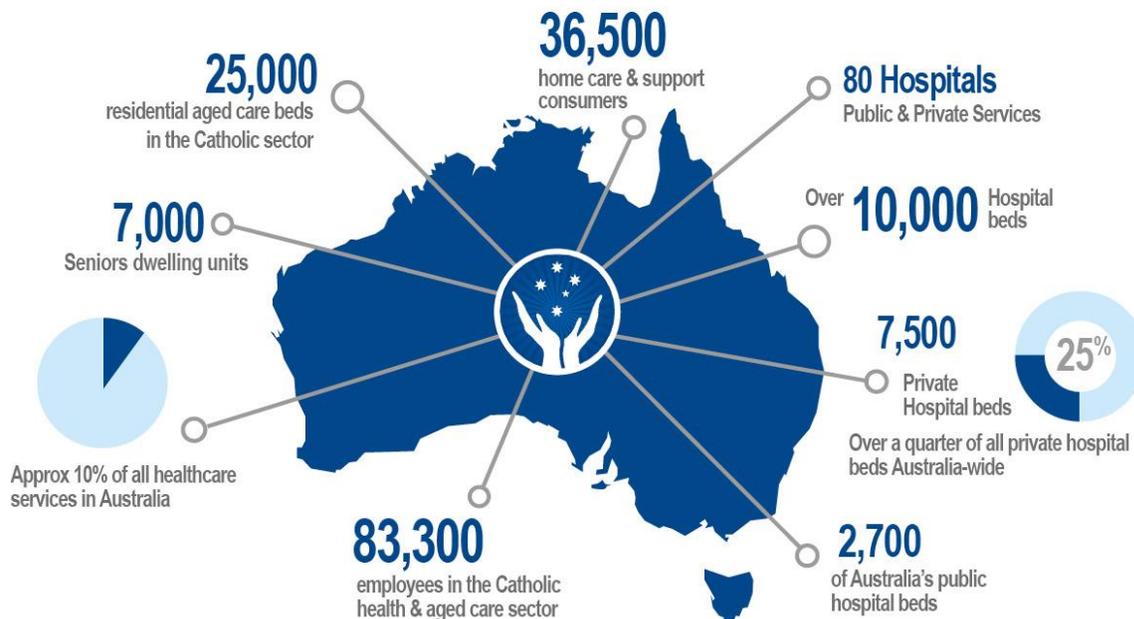


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*Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia's largest non-government grouping of health, community, and aged care services accounting for around 10 percent of hospital-based healthcare in Australia. Our members also provide around 25 percent of private hospital care, 5 percent of public hospital care, 12 percent of aged care facilities, and 20 percent of home care and support for the elderly.*



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