

Service Provider Panel

Federal Budget 2024 - 2025

Session Summary
May 2024

Background

The Service Provider Panel met 21 May 2024 to discuss the [Federal Budget 2024-25](#) and the measures aimed at Australia's health care system.

The Australian Government announced a total of \$146.1 billion on health and aged care in 2024-2025, with a five-year commitment to invest \$10.7 billion, including \$8.5 billion in health and \$2.2 billion in aged care.

There will be an investment into 4 key priority areas:

1. Strengthening Medicare: \$2.8 billion
2. Cheaper medicines: \$4.3 billion
3. Quality aged care: \$2.2 billion
4. A fit and healthy Australia: \$1.3 billion

Commissioned Service Providers

Panel members represented a diverse range of services from across WA country regions metropolitan Perth. The following national funding announcements relate to WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) and our commissioned services providers:



- \$227 million to deliver a further 29 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics.
- \$160 million over four years for MyMedicare to enable payment of incentives to general practices supporting wrap around primary care for frequent hospital users.
- \$17.4 million to boost supply of health care in areas of shortage and support health services at risk of closing.
- Continuation of National COVID-19 Vaccine Program - \$490.0 million over four years.
- Free, low-intensity digital service to address the gap for people with mild mental health concerns from 1 January 2026 - \$588.5 million over eight years from 2024-25 and \$113.4 million per year ongoing.
- Free, walk-in Medicare Mental Health Centres, built on the established Head to Health network providing clinical services for adults with moderate-to-severe mental health needs – \$29.9 million over four years.
- \$35.9 million over four years for targeted regional initiatives for suicide prevention - extension by an additional year.
- Wraparound support service for people with complex mental health needs - \$71.7 million over four years and \$24.4 million per year ongoing.
- Funding to improve child and youth mental health services through uplifting workforce capability and co-designing new model of care - \$29.7 million over three years.

Budget



Questions posed to the panel:

- 1) What impacts does the 2024 - 2025 Federal Budget have on your organisation's capacity to deliver services?
- 2) What are the challenges and opportunities from the new budget allocations? What are the collaborative opportunities that support integration (region specific)?
- 3) How can WAPHA support your organisation to adapt to the changes and opportunities presented by the new budget? What collaborative strategies should we prioritise?

"We're all trying to put the person in the centre of health, and we need to build it up from that person rather than programmatic health care."
- Panel comment

1) What impacts does the 2024 - 2025 Federal Budget have on your organisation's capacity to deliver services?

Panel members shared their thoughts of:

- Not being able to access GP services without paying a gap continues to be an issue.
- There is an increasing sense of despair in the regions relating to the financial implications of the limited services readily available.
- There does not appear to be a consistent approach from the different levels of government relating to where funding will come from, and as a result, areas of concern such as chronic condition management have seemingly been omitted.
- The widening gap for the 'missing middle'.
- There does not appear to be any short-term relief for the community while waiting for the release of home care packages.





- Further advocacy is needed around the requirement for patients in country areas to see a doctor face-to-face prior to receiving a Medicare rebate for a telehealth appointment.
- WAPHA acknowledged it is difficult to understand the level of impact this budget will have on organisations without having knowledge of what the concrete measures will be and when the funding will come, however as more information becomes available WAPHA will forward it to commissioned service providers.
- There are challenges relating to the rebranding of Head to Health to Medicare Mental Health Centres, and what this means for providers until the change takes effect later in the year. WAPHA will continue to work with the Australian Government and other PHNs to support this transition and provide updates as we receive them.
- There are potential stigma concerns in relation to the new name, however it can also be viewed positively through recognising and aligning to the universality of Medicare.
- There is an opportunity for integration at a systemic level through co-commissioning and joint regional planning, which is gaining more traction.
- This can be achieved by clearly identifying what is needed and how duplication can be avoided.
- Continued concern relating to staff retention and ongoing support for patients receiving services when contracts cannot be guaranteed.
- Maintaining relationships across service provider organisations, WAPHA, Mental Health Commission, WA Department of Health and Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care remains an ongoing priority.

2) What are the challenges and opportunities from the new budget allocations? What are the collaborative opportunities that support integration (region specific)?

- Clarification was sought on what was meant by integration – a focus on how services can work more effectively together, specifically from a patient journey perspective.
- Difficulty arises with collaborative integration when multiple service providers are trying to secure the same tender.
- There seems to be many new policy proposals and lots of different programs getting extended, but nothing relating to Closing the Gap.

"The requirement for a GP referral can create challenges for a number of our programs and our clients, given the difficulty accessing bulk billing GPs in WA currently."

- Panel comment

"At the end of the day, we know budgets are finite, but there is increasing despair, particularly in the regions around what services are there." - Panel comment

3) How can WAPHA support your organisation in adapting to the changes and opportunities presented by the new budget? What collaborative strategies should we prioritise?

- Immediate areas requiring support were highlighted including surety of contracts, CPI, workforce access and accessing general practice.
- Observation around investment in Head to Health rebranding could be considered wasteful.
- Recognition of impact for short term contracts as well as the unknown future of some contracts was highlighted, and WAPHA's ongoing advocacy in this space where possible is appreciated.
- WAPHA is committed to continuing to improve upon the data sets in place and collecting information that is outcomes focused - the integrated primary mental health care minimum data set, the drug and alcohol minimum data set and the chronic conditions minimum data set are all great examples of records of impact, with outcomes focused data an area for ongoing development.
- The sharing of information is critical, as services wish to achieve the best outcomes for clients whilst at the same time managing and maintaining workforce resources.

An outcome of discussion at this panel meeting, was a commitment to continue to engage **together** as a service provider group, to share updates as soon as available, and support each other where possible regarding logistics of thin markets and prioritising access to services.

"Women's health is sadly lacking... with nothing new or special happening in this budget."

- Panel comment

"There's been a lot of effort, particularly from service providers, about how we can collaborate at ground level, and I think there's been some innovative approaches there." - Panel comment

Overall Themes

The desire for further clarification and information of the budget measure funding specifications, regarding scope of services and timing.

Concerns raised around the continuing barriers to accessing general practice services, especially in the context of decreasing bulk-billing general practices and co-payment requirements, along with expected referral requirements to many WAPHA-funded services.

WAPHA's strategic intent to continue providing tailored support and information for commissioned service providers and ongoing collegiality.