



painaustralia

FEDERAL BUDGET

**2020 - 21
SUMMARY**

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Federal Minister Greg Hunt has handed down another large \$115.5 billion for health, aged care and sport through the 2020–21 Budget, with the portfolio seeing an additional \$32 billion in funding over the next four years.

WHAT DOES THIS BUDGET MEAN FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN?

Overall, it is disappointing to note there is no targeted funding towards addressing pain management, despite the prevalence and pervasive nature of chronic pain.

While support and investment of initiatives such as enhanced access to mental health, continued support for telehealth and increased funding for MBS and medications will undoubtedly benefit the 3.4 million Australians living with chronic pain, the lack of access to important on-ground services such as affordable access to multidisciplinary care will continue to see health costs related to chronic pain spiral.

There is limited funding for specific initiatives relating to pain and pain management.

The Budget includes funding for the regulation of medicinal cannabis however, there is still a concerning lack of evidence-based research into its effectiveness and safety for people living with chronic pain.

The Budget does include funding allocated towards awareness of migraines, as well as the implementation of the unique ID system to protect consumers who receive medical devices and implants.

Much more needs to be done in terms of providing tangible supports for the millions of vulnerable consumers who live with the impact of debilitating chronic pain every day to alleviate their pain and reduce the costs to the health system. The pandemic and the recent opioid changes have made life very difficult for people living with chronic pain – it has never been more critical to ensure pain is a national health priority.



COVID-19 STRENGTHENING PRIMARY CARE - \$4.3 BILLION INVESTMENT

The increased health funding will predominantly strengthen primary care to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, with a large portion of the new investment going towards telehealth (\$2.4 billion). This Budget extends telehealth services for a further six months while the long-term design is developed in conjunction with medical groups and the community. Telehealth for specialists and allied health has also been extended.

This will see continued access to Medicare-subsidised telehealth for general practitioner, nursing, midwifery, allied health, allied mental health services, specialist services and Medicare-subsidised pathology.

Ensuring access to medicines during the pandemic will also be enhanced by supporting access to medicines through fast tracking e-prescribing (\$5 million) and home delivery of medicines to protect vulnerable Australians (\$25 million).

An additional \$377.5 million will be invested towards the establishment and extension of 150 GP-led respiratory clinics.



COVID-19 STRENGTHENING PRIMARY CARE - \$4.3 BILLION INVESTMENT

The Government has made an investment to guarantee Medicare through the Medicare Guarantee Fund, established in 2017-18, which allocates \$39 billion in guaranteed funds for spending on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in 2020-21 and \$160.8 billion over the forward estimates, up \$7.9 billion from last year's budget.

The Budget includes funding for a new PBS New Medicines Funding Guarantee. This Guarantee provides funding for the listing of new medicines on the PBS, to be replenished each year to meet the expected cost of new and amended listings.

The Minister announced the Listing of Evolocumab for hypercholesterolaemia (\$179.2 million) and Lynparza®(olaparib) for ovarian, fallopian tube or primary peritoneal cancers (\$57.4 million) to be listed in 2020. New payment arrangements for high-cost medicines were also announced.

The Budget also includes funding initiatives towards modernising business with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) (\$12 million), and improved regulation for medicinal cannabis (\$1.7 million).



Patient safety will be enhanced through the establishment of a Unique Device Identification System for medical devices (\$7.7 million). The system is an Australian first and will allow tracking and tracing of medical devices that have been implanted in patients. It will enhance the ability for doctors to notify patients quickly if there is a safety issue and strengthen Australia's post market medical device adverse event system. A unique identification framework for PBS medicines will also be devised to offer a tracking system for medicines.

Private health insurance will see continued reforms with insurers now able to increase the age of dependants – from 24 to 31 – to encourage continuity of cover and will also allow people with a disability to remain on their family policy. Home and community-based care will be more accessible, when clinically appropriate, through private health insurance for mental health and general rehabilitation services, with an initial focus on mental health and orthopaedics, to commence on 1 April 2021.

The transparency of out-of-pocket costs for more than 13.6 million Australians with private health insurance has been improved through the Medical Cost Finder website. This Budget commits \$17.1 million to enhance the website which collects, validates and publishes individual non-GP medical specialist fees for consumers.

RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

The Government will continue to support Australians living in rural and remote areas, implementing the \$550 million Stronger Rural Health Strategy. Doctors will have more opportunities to train and practise in rural and remote Australia and nurses and allied health professionals will have a greater role in the delivery of multidisciplinary, team-based primary care.

A \$50.3 million investment will build on, and expand, the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program, which has been successfully operating for more than 20 years. This program also provides valuable economic benefits to communities and regions.



PRIORITISING MENTAL HEALTH, PREVENTIVE HEALTH

The Budget includes an increased commitment to mental health and suicide prevention which is now a national priority, with an unprecedented \$5.7 billion to be spent on mental health in 2020–21.

The number of Medicare-funded psychological services will double from 10 to 20 through the Better Access Initiative, in response to the recommendation of the draft Productivity Commission report with an investment of \$100.8 million.

The Budget also provides \$76 million for mental health support for Australians affected by the bushfire emergency. This includes distress and trauma counselling, additional Medicare-subsidised sessions, training and support for frontline emergency personnel, funding for Kids Helpline and Lifeline, and small grants to assist community recovery and connectedness and bolstering of headspace services in fire-affected areas.

The Government is implementing the largest expansion of the headspace network to date, with the current network of 124 services to grow to 153 services nationally by 2022. Over the next four years, the Government is investing \$630.4 million in the national headspace network. This includes \$534.4 million for the establishment of new services and ongoing service delivery at existing services and \$96 million to address demand and reduce wait times to access headspace services.

The Budget also delivers funding for emergency response measures to support the mental health and wellbeing of Australians through the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes \$74 million to create a new Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Line and boost the capacity of key mental health services and \$48.1 million to support the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan including delivering better data and modelling capacity.

This Budget supports the Prime Minister's Suicide Prevention Adviser's initial advice with \$64.1 million for extension and evaluation of the national suicide prevention trials, expansion of aftercare services for those who have self-harmed or attempted suicide, new postvention services to support families and carers who have been bereaved by suicide, youth peer support, and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth through the Pilbara trial and headspace services.

Under prevention, The Government is providing \$0.6 million to support people who suffer from migraines to improve the management, and increase awareness of, migraines.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

This budget includes significant investment in medical research, including \$6.6 billion over the next four years for:

- Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) (\$2.5 billion)
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (\$3.6 billion)
- Biomedical Translation Fund (BTF) (\$500 million)

As well as new program rounds including:

- \$110 million for 2021 Frontier Health and Medical Research program, to open on 7 October 2020
- \$7.5 million for Efficient Use of Existing Medicines, to open on 7 October 2020
- \$44 million for 2021 Centres of Research Excellence, to open on 21 October 2020
- \$9 million for Childhood Cancer Research Grant, opened on 29 September 2020.



AGED CARE

This Budget provides \$408.5 million to improve the care and quality of the aged care system including 23,000 home care packages being delivered at a cost of \$1.6 billion. The misuse of chemical and physical restraints for people living with dementia will be targeted. More specialist counselling teams will be available to provide expert psychosocial services, including face-to-face and by video and telephone (\$11.3 million). The Budget funds the second stage in the implementation of the new Australian National Aged Care Classification system (\$91.6 million). This will enable independent assessments to deliver more accurate funding to meet the care needs of residents.



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