



Australian Association of Practice Management

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Federal Budget - Highlights for the Health Sector

On Tuesday night the Morrison Government handed down the 2021-22 Budget. Several key measures of relevance to Practice Managers are summarised below:

Covid-19 Response

- In addition to the \$25 billion spent to date since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Budget commits a further \$121.4 billion in 2021–22 and \$503 billion over the next four years.

Primary Health Care

- Investment of \$204.6 million to extend telehealth, \$87.5 million for the extended operation of up to 150 GPRCs, both through to 31 December 2021, and the \$1.9 billion commitment towards the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

General Practice and Indigenous Health

- \$50.7 million to continue to develop an ICT system that will enable a Voluntary Patient Registration Initiative, to be known as MyGP, intended to lift the quality of services delivered to Australian patients through continuity of care.
- \$68.1 million to double the maximum yearly incentive payment for face-to-face services by GPs within residential aged care facilities, through the Aged Care Access Incentive.
- \$22.6 million to reform the Practice Incentives Program – Indigenous Health Incentive, encouraging continuity of care and extending the program to children under 15 years and for GP mental health care plans.

Digital Health

- \$301.8 million towards the next wave of My Health Record (MHR), capitalising on the connections already in place and aiming to create a more coordinated healthcare future for

Australia, and \$32.3 million in continued funding for the 2018–2022 Intergovernmental Agreement on National Digital Health, addressing interoperability within Australia’s national digital health infrastructure.

Mental Health

- \$2.3 billion will be invested in the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan including creating a national network of up to 57 additional mental health treatment centres and satellites for adults, as well as more centres for youth and children through the Head to Health and headspace programs.

Funding to support the role of GPs

- \$34.2 million to support GPs in their role as a key entry point into the mental health system by expanding and implementing the Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) tool in primary care settings and \$15.9 million to support GPs and other medical practitioners to provide primary mental health care.

Rural Health Strategy

- The Government’s rural health initiatives aim to improve access to services by providing incentives and supported pathways to attract more health workers into rural and remote work. The major measure will be \$65.8 million to increase the Rural Bulk Billing Incentive for doctors working in rural towns and remote areas.

Medicare

- The Government is extending a series of primary care measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through to 31 December 2021, including telehealth, with \$711.7 million invested for new and amended listings on the MBS.

Supporting Hospitals

- The Budget includes measures designed to improve sustainability and affordability of PHI into the future. The current policy settings for the Medicare Levy Surcharge (MLS) and PHI Rebate income tiers will continue for a further two years, allowing an in-depth study of the effectiveness of current regulatory settings.

Aged Care Investment

- Responding to the Royal Commission on Aged Care Quality and Safety, the Government is investing \$17.7 billion investment in aged care, establishing a five pillar, five-year-plan for

reforming the sector. This includes \$6.5 billion for an additional 80,000 Home Care Packages and \$3.9 billion to increase the amount of front line care, with a mandated 200 minutes per day, including 40 minutes with a registered nurse.

Dental

- \$107.9 million for a new National Partnership Agreement (NPA) for Adult Dental Services, helping states and territories provide public dental services and \$7.3 million for an extension of the Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS) to children 2 years and younger.

Preventive Health

- The soon-to-be-completed National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030 will aim to reduce the overall burden on the health system arising from supporting patients with persistent and chronic conditions. The Government is investing further in preventive health and early intervention, in an effort to protect Australians from the impact of chronic conditions like cancer, and to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and use of illicit substances.

Medical Research

- \$6.7 billion over four years to drive research which will contribute to improvements in health outcomes for Australians.

Members can download an "at-a-glance" one page summary of healthcare-relevant budget items [HERE](#).