Australia’s universal health care system is one of the best in the world and key comparisons with other OECD countries reveals Australians enjoy a higher level of population health status (OECD Better Life Index – 2013):

- Life expectancy at birth in Australia stands at 82 years, two years above the OECD average of 80.1 years.
- 85% of Australians said they were in good health, higher than the OECD average of 69%.
- The smoking rate amongst adults in Australia is now one of the lowest in the OECD, due in large part to health promotion initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, advertising bans and increased taxation.
- In June 2011, most children were fully immunized – 92% of 1 year olds, 93% of 2 year olds, and 90% of 5 year olds.

The 2014-15 federal Budget breaks the commitment to funding reforms negotiated in 2011 and agreed to by the Commonwealth and State governments.

Public hospital funding cuts amount to $1.162 billion nationally. The additional funding, before these cuts were proposed, would have met the costs of around 2 million more admitted patient episodes of care; an extra 2.9 million services in emergency departments; and 19 million additional outpatient consultations based on current patterns of hospital expenditure.

The cuts to funding also puts at risk: increased improvements and access to aged care; improving emergency department and elective surgery waiting times; primary care services with clear national standards and targets; significant expansion of sub-acute care services through the provision of $1.6 billion funding over 1,300 beds.

Funding to NSW Hospitals will be cut by $1.2 billion over the next four years.

Under the National Partnership Agreements, dental health services will be cut by $390 million; hospital improvement programs such as improving emergency care and sub-acute services will be cut by $201 million between 2015 to 2017.

The National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health is to be terminated and over $367 million cut from preventive health programs over the next 4 years.

The National Preventive Health Agency is to be abolished (raising a further $6.4 million). Smoking cessation programs will also be cut ($2.9 million).

Australia’s universal health care system is one of the best in the world and key comparisons with other OECD countries reveals Australians enjoy a higher level of population health status (OECD Better Life Index – 2013):

- Life expectancy at birth in Australia stands at 82 years, two years above the OECD average of 80.1 years.
- 85% of Australians said they were in good health, higher than the OECD average of 69%.
- The smoking rate amongst adults in Australia is now one of the lowest in the OECD, due in large part to health promotion initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, advertising bans and increased taxation.
- In June 2011, most children were fully immunized – 92% of 1 year olds, 93% of 2 year olds, and 90% of 5 year olds.

The federal Budget imposes a set of $7 co-payments for people accessing GP, pathology and imaging services. These new and increased charges will raise costs for consumers by over $1 billion a year from 1 July 2015.

Australians already feel pressured by out-of-pocket costs associated with health care. In 2008, more than one million Australians aged 15 and over delayed seeing a GP due to the cost of the consultation.

Increased out-of-pocket costs for what is a comparatively small saving of $750 million over 4 years only functions as a further disincentive to visit GPs and will cost future generations in billions.

Research from the Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University (ANU) has found those receiving government benefits already do the budget “heavy lifting”: ANU projections show an unemployed single parent with an eight-year-old child will be worse off $54 a week, or 12 per cent of their disposable income.

The line: “We are in a debt crisis” is a myth. Our economy is tracking well and we can afford more investment in health! Our economy has proved its strengths through the global financial crisis and our debt is very low; in fact well below the OECD average for over 30 years.