



Chronic Disease Inquiry Report Released

The House of Representatives Health Committee today released the report for its *Inquiry into Chronic Disease Prevention and Management in Primary Health Care*.

Chronic disease is a heavy burden on Australia's health care system, and on society as a whole, contributing to 90 per cent of the mortality rate in Australia. In 2014, seven million Australians, over a third of the population, had at least one chronic disease, with many suffering from multiple conditions. As a result of this challenge to the health care system, the Health Committee undertook a wide-ranging inquiry to consider best practice in preventing and managing chronic disease in Australia.

During the conduct of its inquiry, the Committee examined: prevention and management of chronic disease in Australia and internationally, funding models for chronic disease care, the emerging role of Primary Health Networks, the contribution of private health insurers, as well as the likely improvements to come from the Health Care Home trials announced by the Australian Government (commencing in 2017).

On release of the report, Committee Chair Mr Steve Irons MP stated 'While Australia benefits from one of the most advanced and equitable health care systems in the world, chronic disease continues to be a major challenge to providing the best outcomes for patients. As lifestyles and behaviours have changed along with advances in medical technology and practices, the increase in life expectancy has been accompanied by an alarming increase in chronic disease. Furthermore, the burden of chronic disease is inequitably distributed within the community. Chronic disease in Australia requires a response which focuses on coordinated and multidisciplinary care, efficient funding models, and an overall approach which emphasises prevention as well as management.

Key recommendations of the report are:

- Expanding performance indicators for Primary Health Networks to include more specific data, to be prioritised for research to inform targeted service provision.
- Investigating an expansion of the Medicare Benefits Schedule to allow for more allied health treatments per year, and to allow direct referral between allied health professionals and specialists in certain circumstances.
- Improving privacy restrictions related to clinician access to patient records.
- Expanding the current Practice Incentive Program to include breast, bowel and skin cancer screening and Integrated Health Checks.
- Continuing support and expansion of the My Health Record to support chronic disease prevention and management.
- Prioritising the development and implementation of the Health Care Home trials as part of a *Healthier Medicare*.

The [report](#) is now available from the Committee's website.

For media comment, please contact Jonathan Martin from the office of Mr Steve Irons MP on 0439 412 855. **Inquiry information:** please contact the committee secretariat on: (02) 6277 4145 or visit the committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/health.