

# HEALTH

## Socialist Equality

In regards to health care the SEP calls for billions to be provided to the public health system, to finance a huge expansion in staffing, training, technology and equipment. We call for a massive injection of funds also into public mental health, including residential, and into public dental hospitals and clinics, which must also be free and available to all.

## Socialist Alliance

*The Socialist Alliance Party did not provide a response to this question. Policy information has been collated from the Socialist Alliance website [www.socialist-alliance.org](http://www.socialist-alliance.org)*

The Socialist Alliance bases its policy on health promotion, disease prevention and timely treatment of illnesses and includes promoting good health. It aims to encourage a healthy community in a healthy environment and reduce health risks. Health includes the physical, mental and social well being of the community. It is a resource used by individuals on a daily basis.

The Socialist Alliance will restore and extend Medicare. The Socialist Alliance endorses the principle of universal health insurance which underlies Medicare, and emphasises that Medicare is not just a "safety net".

The Socialist Alliance would make multi-disciplinary community primary health care services the cornerstone of the health system. Funding would be made available to general practitioners working in poorer areas to convert their practices to community health centres, with the doctors and other health professionals working in salaried positions within the public service.

The Socialist Alliance would ensure that essential pharmaceuticals are available according to need. We will ensure that mental health services are adequately funded. Counselling, psychological and psychiatric services will be made available free of charge in Community Health Centres (CHCs).

The Socialist Alliance will ensure that funding and structuring of health services emphasise prevention and equity. We recognise that complementary and alternative therapies, if properly regulated, can play an important role in a democratically-run, community based health system that focuses on prevention and education. We will ensure that patients' rights are respected.

The Socialist Alliance will ensure that there is an adequate health workforce to meet the healthcare needs of all Australians. We will expand student positions in tertiary health education faculties to overcome the shortage of health workers in nursing, aged care and general practice, particularly in rural areas.

## Coalition

The Australian health system is one of the best in the world, offering high quality health care while remaining highly affordable to Australian families.

Unlike many other countries, means are not a barrier to getting necessary health care in Australia.

The Coalition is very proud of its achievements in health. Since 1996, federal spending on health and aged care had more than doubled to \$52 billion a year. Even more importantly, we've improved the quality and sustainability of Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Under the Coalition, health care has approached its federal health responsibilities with a philosophy of continuous improvement. We've training more doctors and nurses, we've taken the national lead on helping people with mental illnesses, and we've worked to relieve pressure on our healthcare resources by doing a lot more on preventive health and helping Australians better manage chronic health conditions.

Our State-run public hospitals undoubtedly are struggling despite the extraordinary efforts of those that work in them. While we aren't responsible for running public hospitals, Coalition policies have helped to relieve the pressure on them by expanding after-hours GP services and getting over 40 per cent of hospital admissions and 56 per cent of surgery into private hospitals.

## Labor

*The Labor Party did not provide a response for this forum. Policy information has been collated from the ALP website [www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)*

Labor believes that every individual in our society has the right to live their lives in the best possible health and to receive the best possible care when they need it.

In order to achieve this, Labor will:

- put the highest priority on promoting wellness and preventing disease;
- defend and strengthen Medicare, which is the cornerstone of Australia's health system;
- build a better system of community and primary care;
- defend and strengthen the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which is essential to ensuring Australians have access to pharmaceuticals at affordable prices;
- defend and strengthen Australia's free public hospital system;
- solve the current health and medical workforce crisis and develop the workforce we need for the future of health care;
- improve the health status of Indigenous Australians;
- give targeted assistance to those with special needs;
- improve private health insurance and better integrate the private hospital sector into Australia's health system;
- reform Australia's health system to improve its efficiency and fiscal sustainability;
- integrate new technology into the provision of health care and better manage patient information;
- empower users of health services;
- improve the quality of our health care services; and
- implement a national drugs strategy to prevent the onset of use, intervene early and minimize the harm caused by legal and illegal drugs.

The detail of Labor's health platform is at [http://www.alp.org.au/platform/chapter\\_10.php](http://www.alp.org.au/platform/chapter_10.php)

## Christian Democrats

Christianity holds that Humans, above every other creatures, enjoy God-given rights that no other authority can legitimately remove. Hence the care for the sick, infirm and weak and the respect for all Humans from conception to natural death is one of the central attributes of Christianity.

Christian tradition also holds those who practice medicine with special regard and responsibility because of their close relationship with human life and death CDP affirms that all Australians, irrespective of their income or location, should have access to essential health services. However the ever increasing cost of health services to the public purse requires that individuals do what they reasonably can to care for and maintain their own health. The CDP supports the introduction of government /industry education campaigns to promote healthy diets and lifestyles

CDP supports government assistance to cover essential dental expenses for means tested patients and a large scale public campaign to promote oral hygiene.

CDP believes that the under-resourcing of our hospitals must be urgently addressed through the following measures:

- provision for additional student places at medical and nursing schools including full
- fee paying student places;
- attractive scholarships available to medical and nursing students;
- immigration policies that favour well qualified medical practitioners and nurses from
- other English-speaking countries;
- the construction of new government metropolitan and regional hospitals
- incentives and support to Christian denominations with a demonstrated capacity in
- the provision of health services to renovate and build new not-for-profit metropolitan
- and regional hospitals

## Australian Democrats

The Australian Democrats are committed to improving and protecting Medicare's fundamental principles of access and affordability for all, and return to a pact between government and doctors wherein doctors agree to charge fees that are close to the schedule fee and governments agree to an indexation system for the schedule fee (and therefore the rebate) that is transparent and fair; lower the eligibility threshold for the Medicare safety net for low and middle income earners and raise the threshold for higher income earners; support medicine availability for all Australians and at affordable prices.

[http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/ElectionPlatform\\_OurHealthSystem\\_2007.pdf](http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/ElectionPlatform_OurHealthSystem_2007.pdf)

[http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath\\_Medicare\\_2007.pdf](http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath_Medicare_2007.pdf)

[http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath\\_MedicareSafetyNets\\_2007.pdf](http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath_MedicareSafetyNets_2007.pdf)

[http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath\\_Pharmaceuticals\\_2007.pdf](http://www.democrats.org.au/docs/ActionPlans/Heath_Pharmaceuticals_2007.pdf)

# Greens

The Greens believe everyone has the right to timely, high quality health care.

The fairest and most efficient way to achieve this is through a strong and well-resourced public health system. We would abolish the private health insurance rebate and redirect funds to the public health system, including public hospitals. The Greens support Medicare as a universal health insurance scheme funded from progressive taxation.

We would introduce and fully fund a Commonwealth Dental scheme for low income earners and their families to provides essential dental care and a full dental examination every two years and adopt mechanisms to increase access to primary dental services through Medicare (Denticare).