

Despite establishing Australia's first national wellbeing framework and increasing expenditure on health and aged care, the Government's spending reflects little investment in a sustainable health system for the future.

This year's federal budget increases spending on health and aged care by \$9.7 billion compared with the May 2023-24 budget. It indicates that total health and aged care spending over the next four years will be \$628 billion, an increase of \$37 billion from the May 2023-24 budget allocation of \$590 billion.

'This is the eye-watering cost of tinkering around the edges of our current system. Expenditure will continue to escalate when there is an absence of spending for the long-term reform the health system needs', says AHHA Chief Executive Kylie Woolcock.

'The biggest reforms appear in mental health and suicide prevention. The mental health package described in the Budget reflects a value-based approach committed to the Medicare principle of universality. People will have a model of care available to them that is appropriate for their level of need. The models will utilise a diverse mental health workforce with each working to the top of their scope. Equitable access and affordability have been identified as key to their success.'

'The same cannot be said for primary care and preventive health.

'In contrast with last year's Budget, where a raft of Medicare reforms in general practice and primary care were announced as measures to relieve the pressure on hospitals, this Budget directs funding to the states and territories to support earlier discharge from hospital.

'And for rural communities, the investments in health infrastructure are welcome, but will not address the critical support needed for innovative models of care and a workforce that supports place-based wellbeing and prevention.

'Investments in health and climate change, as well as announcements on the long-awaited Australian Centre for Disease Control (ACDC), are also notably absent.'