



Wednesday, 13 May 2015

Federal Budget does little to save SA from health cuts

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) says this year's Federal Budget will do little to save South Australian hospitals, and nurses and midwives from savage budget cuts over the next decade.

"Last night's budget still leaves a gaping hole in previously-agreed hospital funding to the states," ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM said.

"South Australia's health system is still staring down the barrel of close to a billion dollars in cuts from our health budget in 2024. Nationally, the \$50 billion torn from our health care system in last year's budget still stands, which is the equivalent of sacking 1 in 5 nurses and shutting 1 in 13 hospital beds."

The Federal Government will also save \$962.8 million over five years in new measures that axe dental and preventative health programs and halt the construction of any new GP Super Clinics which have not yet commenced.

"In 2011 alone, chronic diseases accounted for 90% of all deaths, and Government expenditure on conditions including cardiovascular disease, mental health, respiratory conditions and diabetes mellitus costs over \$20 billion a year. Tearing money from primary and preventative health is not the way to fund a sustainable health system in the long term," Ms Dabars said.

Ms Dabars added the slight rise in funding to the states across the forward estimates was akin to trying to use a Band-Aid to fix the blunt force trauma handed down in last year's budget.

Despite the Federal Government's decision not to persevere with its plans to reduce rebates by \$5 for common GP consultations and alter the funding arrangements GP consultations, the changes to prescription costs slated in last year's budget will also still proceed.

This will see prescription costs rise by \$5 per script from the beginning of next year.

"We know that cost is already a major factor in preventing people from having their scripts filled – the flow on effect from this short-sighted cash grab is a significant concern for our health system and the staff that keep it running."

Ms Dabars said the budget did contain several important measures including new plans to ensure children fully meet immunisation requirements before their families can access certain Government payments, and investment in programs to improve adult immunisation rates and tissue and organ donation rates.

Empowering
Developing
Protecting