



Stat Report 2015/15

The Federal Budget and what it means for Health

The Abbott Government would have you believe that this budget is for all families and really quite dull in comparison to last year. The truth is that the cuts to education, the cuts to health and the cuts to pensions all remain. And in fact some of the so-called provisions in this year's budgets for families will only come into effect if last year's cuts are approved.

Changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) will have an immediate and costly effect that will make access to affordable medicines more difficult for poor and vulnerable families. And there has been no funding allocated to pathology or radiation oncology services despite strong rhetoric about wanting to improve access to and quality of pathology and radiation oncology services. In fact the lack of new funding will effectively result in cuts over time as costs in these critically important areas continue to rise.

In addition to these the Government will proceed to cease funding hospitals based on the services they provide in favour of a new model based on population growth and inflation. This change while seemingly inconsequential will result in states and territories being \$57 billion worse off over 10 years. While private health care will amass an additional \$1 billion over four years.

On top of its continued undermining of universal health care and our education system, the Abbott Government has not put any funding towards addressing domestic violence or enhancing mental health provisions given the increasing demand. Despite telling Australia how important it was to address violence against women and children, the Government has completely failed to make it a priority. But this is not surprising given the Government also made a great deal of noise about addressing mental health issues but has failed to deliver any new funding.

These sorts of cuts cannot be absorbed by the Victorian Government and will put further pressure on public health services to cut budgets. This will almost certainly lead to further cuts in staffing levels to reduce operating costs and inevitable increases in workloads and unpaid work.

The Abbott Government is making it clear that it is happy to play lip-service to healthcare as these funding gaps shows it is unwilling to ensure that Australia has a world-class health system that gives everyone the health care they need when they need it.

Join us at Annual Conference to explore the details and implications of the Abbott Government's 2nd budget. [Sign up today here.](#)

Changes to paid parental leave scheme despicable

If you didn't catch the coverage about this year's Federal Budget then you would've missed the

significant changes proposed to our paid parental leave scheme.

It is extraordinary to find ourselves discussing changes to paid parental leave that will see nearly half of all eligible families losing out, when it was only last year that Tony Abbott was arguing, as a signature policy, for 6 months of paid parental leave with full income replacement up to \$75,000.

How times have changed...a lot!

What was announced in this year's budget will see a major winding back of the paid parental leave scheme that working Australians have fought for through bargaining and lobbying over decades. And for the Prime Minister, the Treasurer and the Social Services Minister to say (repeatedly) that some families are double-dipping is extremely disingenuous to say the least.

The paid parental leave scheme was always designed to be a complementary measure to those schemes already offered by employers. And where those employer schemes didn't cover 26 weeks of paid parental leave, the government topped up those provisions. No families are double-dipping.

But if these proposed changes go through the Parliament it will result in tens of thousands of families losing out and forcing parents back into the workforce sooner without the availability of adequate childcare options. This will only cause greater stress and could actually result in a reduction in workforce participation as women, predominantly the primary care-giver, are unable to find childcare. Ultimately it will make it more difficult for families to make ends meet.

The Government spent time promoting its total inaction on superannuation tax benefits giving people on higher incomes greater tax relief through their superannuation. The gap between women's and men's superannuation has significantly widened which is unlikely to be closed in the near future.

So in the end what was meant to be a gold-standard, key signature, Paid Parental Leave scheme has been up-ended for a dismantling of a hard-won scheme. In all of this it is important to remember that the Paid Parental Leave scheme wasn't a gift from government or from employers. It was won due to the decades-long fight by members like you.

The Union remains confident that these measures are very unlikely to be passed by the Senate. However, as we get a better understanding of the package and its impacts on members we'll report them to you in STAT Report.

Unpaid work has far-reaching implications

It is becoming growingly obvious that for many health services the workplace culture is such that new staff feel pressured into doing unpaid work on their own initiative rather than because they've been asked to by their supervisor or management team. In the Union's survey, 84% of respondents suggested being unable to complete tasks within ordinary hours; 65% noting their department is understaffed; and 60% are doing unpaid work to deal with urgent requests.

It is also interesting that when asked if there were sufficient staff to cover the workload when staff take annual leave or sick leave, 86% of respondents indicated there were not enough staff. The incidence of management refusing to engage replacement staff is growing rapidly with reports now regularly coming in from members.

The results from the Survey will not necessarily shock anyone. However the results from the Survey do show a stark reality for medical scientists, psychologists and hospital pharmacists – that workloads are significantly increasing, staff levels are not meeting increases in demand and more unpaid work is being performed than in 2011-12.

It is apparent that with ever increasing workloads and diminishing resources, more and more staff are doing unpaid work outside of their rostered hours; and during their meal breaks. And it is evident that health services are not investing in the necessary staff to cope with workloads:

and planned or unplanned absences. In the interests of continuous cost-cutting, this most basic workforce management responsibility is being discarded by health services.

The research also points to a growing problem in the public healthcare system – unpaid work is structurally relied upon to keep vital clinical services functioning.

And while the workloads are growing rapidly; and demand on the healthcare system grows, there is not a similar increase in the workforce. In order to ensure a world-class healthcare system it is essential to ensure there is professional workforce, not one made up of underqualified or inexperienced people, of sufficient size to meet the growing demand and service output requirements..

If this unsustainable model is allowed to continue it puts staff at greater risk of suffering workplace injuries or long periods of illness, further compounding workload and staffing issues.

Unpaid work isn't only about whether you can get through the workload when the workload grows. It can mean that more errors crop up in our work becoming an additional stress in an already stressful working environment.

Annual Conference will be exploring workloads, the issues around addressing it and what we can do about it. [Join us at Annual Conference to find out more by signing up here.](#)

Red Cross Blood Service continues its anti-science approach

If there is one thing to say about the Red Cross Blood Service, it is that it's 100 per cent committed to being a manufacturing company. No longer does the Blood Service refer to its status as a critical part of Australia healthcare system, preferring to use only hyperbole and management spin.

And sadly, that hyperbole and management spin is in overdrive as the Blood Service continues its anti-science approach. Nearly a year after cutting scientist positions, the organisation is cutting more scientist positions and replacing them with less qualified technicians. And despite the rest of the world's blood services insisting on enhancing the role of science in their work, the Australian Red Cross Blood Service thinks it is world-class to reduce the role of scientists.

Unfortunately this bloody-minded view of being a 'manufacturing organisation' will result in a major deterioration in the ability of the Red Cross Blood Service to continue being a world-class organisation. And it is a great shame that over the course of the last 12 months the Union has received a growing number of reports from blood banks about the errors in blood products; the wrong blood products being delivered; and growing delays in having blood products delivered.

The Union will be working with members that are affected by this latest round of changes.

Annual Conference 2015

Annual Conference is on at the end of May. And we're excited about it because it's a great chance for members across the MSAV, VPA Inc and AHP to come together and share experiences at work, explore the current and future industrial landscape, and find out more about our *No Pay? No Way!* campaign.

This year's conference is focussed on addressing the growing and structural issues around workloads and staffing.

Plus Mary-Anne Thomas, Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for Health, will be joining us to outline the Andrews Government health policies. You'll hear first-hand how the Victorian Government will ensure Victorians will continue to enjoy world-class healthcare.

The Annual Conference is free and open to all members and we [strongly encourage you to](#)

[register](#) today to save your spot.

Conference details:

Date: 29 May

Time: 9:30am to 4pm (registration starts at 9am)

Venue: DownTowner on Lygon at 66 Lygon St Carlton

[Register for Annual Conference here](#)

Save the date – Friday 29 May – for Annual Conference

Join the campaign – No Pay? No Way!

Show your support for the campaign by downloading & using one of our graphics for your email signature.



FORUM: The Trans-Pacific-Partnership - Why you should be Concerned

Discussions of key challenges for the left with thinkers and activists. Panel discussions co-hosted by the SEARCH Foundation and The New International Bookshop on the topics most critical to Australia's economic, political and environmental future

It's no secret that the negotiations for the Trans-Pacific-Partnership Deal (TPP) have been shrouded in secrecy. Perhaps that's because this latest corporate trade deal threatens to have wide-ranging negative social & environmental implications that will impact on our lives?

Come listen to an expert panel explain the multiple problems/flaws/dangers inherent in the TPP and join the debate on what we can do to fight against it.

Dr Matthew Mitchell - Has written critically about the corporate interests driving the TPP and is a Lecturer in Information Systems at RMIT

Dr Deborah Gleeson - Has written widely about the potential health implications of the TPP and is a Lecturer in the School of Psychology and Public Health at La Trobe University

Angela Daly - Has written about the intellectual property implications of the TT and is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Swinburne Institute for Social Research (Australia).

Matthew Rose - has written about the environmental implications of the TPP. He is works as an economist for the Australian Conservation Foundation.

Event Details

When: 21 May at 6:45pm

Where: Trades Hall - 54 Victoria Street, Melbourne

Admission: \$10 or \$5 Concession

More details at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/643047989159610/>

Worth Reading: The Budget's not-so-simple impact on families

“Only two days before its second budget, the Abbott government marked Mother’s Day by releasing details of proposed changes to parental leave and childcare payments. The sting in the tail came with the announcement that parents will no longer be able to apply for government-funded paid parental leave – which amounts to eighteen weeks at the minimum wage – if they have access to an equivalent scheme through their workplace.

This is one source of the savings intended to fund an overhaul of childcare payments and the introduction of a new and simpler [Child Care Subsidy](#). Other funds would come from changes to family tax benefits, or FTB. Labor [expects](#) the government to tie its Jobs for Families package, of which childcare reforms represent an important component, to benefit cuts introduced last year but blocked by the Senate. Those measures would have reset the value of end-of-year supplements for all FTB families and paused the indexation of rates and thresholds for two years.”

Read the entire article by Daniel Nethery in Inside Story at: <http://insidestory.org.au/the-budgets-not-so-simple-impact-on-families>

Worth Reading: Reflections on budget cuts to Australia's health system, from my hospital bed

“Some aspects of Australia’s healthcare system are most visible from the angle of a hospital bed. That was exactly where I was lying when I wrote this, shortly before Joe Hockey cut health spending by a further \$2bn in his second attempt at a budget.

I am going through an established procedure for the bone marrow cancer multiple myeloma at Canberra hospital. The hospital is not tottering on the verge of collapse. The workers here are providing vital services but it’s tough for them.

Canberra hospital staff are, in general, very dedicated and capable. They are also very exploited, therefore alienated, by low pay, disagreeable shift work, inadequate working conditions and lack of collective control over what they do. In both respects, Canberra hospital is like all public hospitals in this country.”

Read the entire article by Rick Kuhn in The Guardian at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/13/reflections-on-budget-cuts-to-australias-health-system-from-my-hospital-bed>

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ACTU Member Connect makes sure the products and services are from companies you can rely on to deliver high-quality products with reliable customer service.

There is more information about a range of other benefits union members can access at <http://www.memberconnect.com.au/> or you can call ACTU Member Connect on 1300 362 223.

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