

Stat Report 2016/18

Think about health and your career this election

After nearly 8 weeks of this federal election campaign, it comes down to the final pitches from the major parties about who can best lead Australia as voters head to polling centres on 2 July. And while it has been the longest campaign in a very long time, and perhaps the most mind-numbing, this election is extremely important for the kind of health system we want and the sort of future we create for ourselves.

Since coming to power in 2013, the Abbott-Turnbull Government has set about wrecking the public healthcare system. In their final budget we saw the Coalition government slash millions, totaling around \$50 billion in Liberal cuts, out of healthcare and hospitals funding.. And as the Turnbull Government maintains and extends the cuts to healthcare and hospitals, it's important to remember that each time the government cuts funding, it means fewer staff to do more work adding to the pressure you feel at work.

Each funding cut means that our public health services are under more pressure to keep delivering world-class healthcare with much less. And as the pressure grows, public health services are being forced to make tough choices about how far they're prepared to let our healthcare system slide.

You know like I do that the tough choices public health services are making are fundamentally about the future of our professions and the future of our work and careers. We know that when the pressure is really on public health services will target our jobs, even though we are part of making a world-class healthcare system.

Everyone working in healthcare is essential to giving patients the very best care possible so they can return to good health. By picking and choosing which clinical services will be cut, public health services are effectively determining the level of care patients receives – including ourselves.

The Turnbull Government has also attempted to be tough on mental health and suicide prevention but has completely failed to outline policies or a strategy; or how they would tackle these urgent issues. But here too the truth is the Turnbull Government slashed millions of dollars from mental health and family violence services – even refusing to commit to a national suicide prevention scheme.

It's simply not good enough for Malcolm Turnbull and Sussan Ley to continue, even now in the week before the election, to make unsupported claims about how they're improving our healthcare system to make it sustainable or that there are no plans to privatize Medicare. This is particularly galling when the reality is that since coming to power, the Abbott-Turnbull Government have slashed billions from hospitals, put a freeze on Medicare rebates (effectively

introducing co-payments by stealth), increased the cost of medicines (including co-payments for some PBS-listed medicines) and increased the cost of getting pathology tests and diagnostic imaging tests done.

The reality is that our universal healthcare system is sustainable and there is no valid reason to pursue drastic and completely unnecessary measures that make accessing healthcare more expensive.

For most people, issues like healthcare are among the top 3 issues when they vote. But it is increasingly clear that the Coalition puts little value on having a healthy nation. The Abbott-Turnbull Government has also made drastic cuts to higher education, research and to the CSIRO. There are measures to further cut social services and introduce so-called internships for young people that pay \$4 per hour. Not enough has been said this election about climate change and its growing impacts on healthcare; including the complexity of patient cases. And the National Broadband Network remains inadequate and already considered antiquated technology; not to mention cost billions to fix.

Working in healthcare you know how much harder it has become to deliver the quality healthcare we know can be delivered because of continuous cuts to health. And you know what it's like to feel the pressure from workloads explode with greater expectations that you'll do more unpaid work.

An Abbott-Turnbull Government will continue to attack healthcare and health services will respond with making further cuts. And you know what that means – it means job cuts in areas like pathology and mental health services and with fewer staff and increasing workloads the risk of errors increases.

It's for these reasons and many more that we strongly recommend that you put the Liberals last in both the House of Representatives and the Senate this election when you cast your vote on 2 July.

Vote to protect our universal healthcare system and our professions.

-- Paul Elliott

Executive Officer

Vote to save Medicare



[Watch this video on YouTube](#)

Worth Reading: Corporate Tax Cuts Are About Something Bigger Than ‘Jobs And Growth’

“While the nation has debated whether Malcolm Turnbull’s business tax cuts will drive the “jobs and growth” this government is promising, the broader trend it feeds into – privatising the delivery of essential services – has largely been overlooked.

On one hand, analysis from the Grattan Institute has shown that the tax cuts would have a very small benefit to national income over a long period, and this has been reported as if it calls into question much of the justification for the cuts. On the other hand, the government presents Treasury modelling of a more meaningful effect on national income in order to justify its ten-year economic plan.

The problem with all of this modelling – supportive or otherwise – is that it misses the fundamental purpose of the Coalition’s tax cut plans. The real impact of the cuts is not to drive “jobs and growth”, but to structurally undermine government revenue.”

Read the entire article by Colin Long in New Matilda at:

<https://newmatilda.com/2016/06/23/corporate-tax-cuts-are-about-something-bigger-than-jobs-and-growth/>

Worth Reading: Election FactCheck: Has the Coalition invested an average of \$5 billion more per year into Medicare than Labor did?

The Liberal Party has said that it is investing \$5 billion more per year on average into Medicare than Labor did.

Is that right?

We asked the Liberal Party to provide the sources of the statement but we did not receive a reply before publication. However, we can test this against the available data that tracks Medicare expenditure.

One major uncertainty in the claim is that there are different definitions of what constitutes Medicare.

The two major areas we are focusing on as representing Medicare expenditure are the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS). The MBS covers expenditure on medical services, and includes things like professional attendances, diagnostics and therapeutic procedures, while the PBS pays for drugs. The government budgetary definition of Medicare spending is only for the MBS. However, we believe the PBS is likely to be contained within the Liberal Party figure of \$5 billion.

Read the entire article at *The Conversation* at:

<http://theconversation.com/election-factcheck-has-the-coalition-invested-an-average-of-5-billion-more-per-year-into-medicare-than-labor-did-61299>

Worth Reading: Election FactCheck: Election FactCheck: has the Coalition cut bulk-billing for pathology and scans ‘to make patients pay more’?

The opposition has released political ads accusing the government of planning to privatisate Medicare and warning of higher health costs in future – a campaign Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has called “extraordinarily dishonest.”

As part of Labor’s Medicare campaign, shadow health minister Catherine King said that the government has “cut bulk-billing payments for pathology and diagnostic imaging to make patients pay more”. Incentives worth between \$1.40 to \$3.40 are paid direct to pathology service providers to encourage them to bulk-bill.

Is King right?

Read the entire article at *The Conversation* at:

<http://theconversation.com/election-factcheck-has-the-coalition-cut-bulk-billing-for-pathology-and-scans-to-make-patients-pay-more-61360>

Worth Reading: Medicare outsourcing a 'licence to steal'

Outsourced Medicare payments could be handing companies a "licence to steal" taxpayers' money, one of Australia's leading health finance figures has warned.

Claims processing must be in the hands of public servants who are not motivated by profit, medical billing services pioneer Margaret Faux has written in a passionate defence of Medicare, which, she says, is "too precious to be preyed upon by corporate greed".

The US experience in private billing of public medical services offers a chilling warning of how the private sector can plunder the health budget if given the chance, Ms Faux has written on health blog Croakey.

Read the entire article by Noel Towell in *The Age*:

<http://www.theage.com.au/national/public-service/medicare-outsourcing-a-licence-to-steal-says-billing-pioneer-margaret-faux-20160628-gptnzw.html#ixzz4D2cfA8TC>

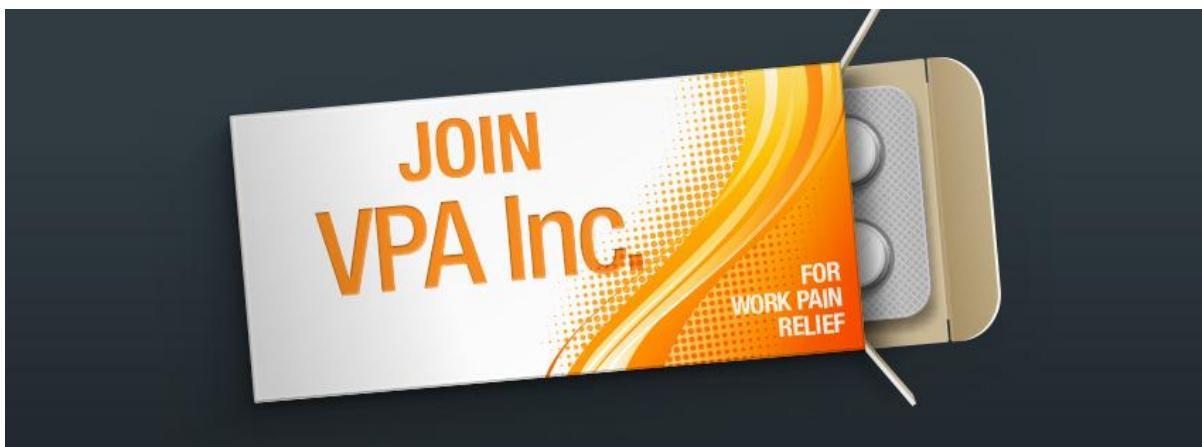
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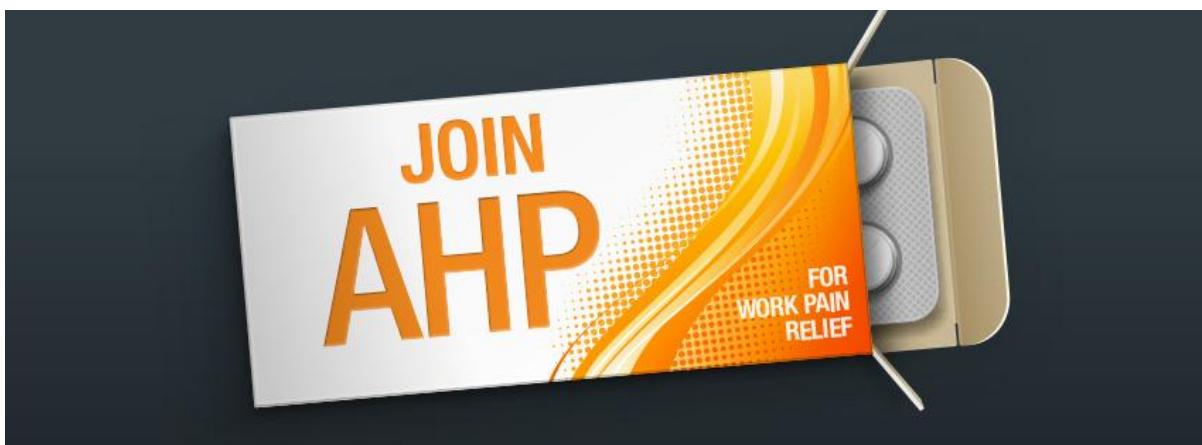
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The Union's website has a number of special features for members. These features, like the Members section and the Forums, require you to have a log-in and password.

But to ensure that your privacy is protected we have created the website in such a way that you will need a separate log-in and password for the Members section and the Forums section. It might seem to be inconvenient but it does better protect you and your private information. It also means that we can be more certain about the source of a hack if such an event is ever to arise.

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