

Thursday, 14 May 2026

Funding for vulnerable communities supports SWSPHN's vital work

Funding to secure the future of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, a boost in the number of aged care beds and investment in the primary care workforce with additional GP training places, are among key health commitments announced in the 2026-2027 Federal Budget.

In responding to Tuesday's budget, South Western Sydney PHN (SWSPHN) Acting Chief Executive Officer, Amy Prince, said it was pleasing to see the Federal Government's ongoing investment in Strengthening Medicare, continued access to healthcare for older persons and the new Thriving Kids reform.

"While we of course welcome the government's commitment to healthcare funding for our more vulnerable community members, a greater focus on primary healthcare, and in particular GP workforce and sustainability pressures, will be welcomed in the future," she said.

"An important part of SWSPHN's role is to help reduce health inequities and improve health outcomes for vulnerable groups, including First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse populations and people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

"Investment in general practice bulk billing incentives, culturally sensitive care for our First Nations communities, and more residential aged care beds and payments to aged care homes to support low means residents, supports our vital work."

Ms Prince also noted the value of investing to make Urgent Care Clinics (UCC) a healthcare fixture in Australia. "Our community has embraced the six UCCs commissioned by SWSPHN across the region, and we welcome these services becoming a longer-term alternative to hospital emergency departments for people with urgent but not life-threatening healthcare needs," she said.

"SWSPHN has had a significant amount of positive feedback from patients and their families who praise UCCs for how easily and quickly they received the care they needed, demonstrating that these services are addressing a community need."

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

South Western Sydney PHN is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting general practitioners, practice nurses and other primary health providers to deliver the best possible care for their patients. Our aim is to improve access to quality local healthcare for all residents living in the Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown, Camden, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee LGAs. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, water and skies of South Western Sydney, the Darug, Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

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FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Key budget features include:

Medicare Urgent Care Clinics

\$1.8 billion to secure the future of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics as permanent features of Australia's health system. This builds on previous investments to expand the total network to 137 clinics across Australia. The network has delivered almost three million free visits nationwide. By July 2026, four in five Australians will live within a 20-minute drive of their local Medicare Urgent Care Clinic.

Bulk billing

\$11.4 billion to incentivise bulk billing, with a goal of ensuring nine out of 10 GP services are bulk billed by 2030. Since the bulk billing reforms commenced on 1 November 2025, 1,420 general practices across Australia which were previously mixed billing have become fully bulk billing. The national GP bulk billing rate has also risen to 81.4 per cent in the period between November 2025 and January 2026.

First Nations health

\$144.1 million to expand on the more than 100 projects already delivered or underway to improve health infrastructure across Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Better access to life-sustaining, culturally safe care within First Nations communities and on Country with \$44.4 million for culturally safe maternal care for 1,100 mothers, and \$18.9 million to expand access to culturally safe crisis care through 13YARN.

Older people

\$3.7 billion to deliver more beds, more packages and better care for older Australians. This includes \$1.7 billion to incentivise construction of up to 5,000 aged care beds a year and protect equity of access for those less well off. Investment includes \$606.5 million to: introduce new capital subsidies for aged care providers who build or expand residential accommodation; deliver up to 20 extra Specialist Dementia Care units; and expand the Hospital to Aged Care Dementia Support program. There is also \$1.1 billion for future spending to increase and restructure the Accommodation Supplement and introduce an extra payment for homes with more than 60 per cent low-means residents.

Other recently announced investments in health include:

- an additional 100 Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program places are being made available in 2027, on top of 200 additional places allocated in 2026
- delivery of the next stages of the 'share by default' reforms, which improve My Health Record to give patients and health professionals access to more reliable and timely health information
- the launch of the next phase of the Medicare Mental Health Check In, which provides free Low-intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LiCBT) guided by a trained practitioner via telehealth

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