



Media release
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Peak body of oncologists welcomes cancer-care commitment

A significant funding commitment for cancer patients, struggling with the complexity and cost of cancer care at a time when they are most vulnerable, has been welcomed by the Private Cancer Physicians of Australia (PCPA)

The peak body for private oncologists said the \$2.3 billion cancer-care package announced by Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, during the Budget-in-Reply speech, was significant in terms of financial assistance.

PCPA President, Dr Christopher Steer, said the package was due recognition for people challenged by their medical circumstances and the initiatives would make it easier for people to present early for diagnosis and treatments.

“For the majority of cancer patients, treatment Medicare rebates, public hospital programs and private health insurance will only partially cover the cost, leaving Australians financially stressed at a time when they can least afford it. The out-of-pocket costs associated with cancer treatments have risen steadily as standards of care, treatment advancements and success rates have also increased,” Dr Steer said.

“The funding commitment will particularly benefit disadvantaged and marginalised groups to whom cost and access are steep barriers. Furthermore, certainty and stability in the entire cancer care eco-system will mean care providers and patients can make the best decisions without financial concerns overly influencing the outcome,” Dr Steer said.

“We look forward to both sides of politics engaging with the medical community, patient advocates and the existing service providers to ensure the best outcomes for the taxpayer dollar, and patients.”

Dr Steer outlined the complexities of cancer care in the private sector, which involves patient consultations and anticancer therapy supervision across chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy. Some of these fees have been frozen since November 2012 making gaps in the cost of some services inevitable.

“The PCPA calls on all political parties to commit to ensuring that the present MBS review results in positive outcomes for patients,” he said. ENDS.

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NB *Dr Steer is a practicing regional based oncologist and may not be available at all times*