

Mr Barnett: Invest in prevention....it's cost effective.

It was clear from the WA State Budget that the Premier, Mr Barnett is trying to highlight that health funding is on the increase. But exactly what the "health funding" focuses on remains a concern.

AHPA welcomes announcements for a range of important health initiatives including funding for community mental health services, suicide prevention, Aboriginal Health, and social housing investment. AHPA's National President, Gemma Crawford says however that this doesn't go far enough, with no additional funding slated for health promotion programs, meaning full emergency departments and long hospital waiting lists could be a reality for years to come.

"We think Mr Barnett seems to have 'health' confused with 'illness' Ms Crawford said. "The best way to keep hospital waiting lists down is to stop people getting sick in the first place".

"To keep Australians healthy we need to focus on targeting the causes of chronic disease like obesity, alcohol misuse and physical inactivity – not treating chronic disease when it appears." said Ms Crawford.

WA Branch President Melinda Edmunds says "if the Government is serious about reducing the bottom line of the budget it will invest in prevention. Every \$1 invested in prevention can save over \$5 in health spending".

After the Federal abolishment of the National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health last year many WA health promotion services will be wound up this year.

"It is unfortunate that Mr Barnett didn't aim to rectify some of this funding for critical community based services" Ms Edmunds said.

Ms Edmunds suggests that health promotion can keep half a million Australians out of hospital every year by preventing chronic diseases like diabetes, cancers, stroke and depression.

"We need the Government to step up to the plate and support the health promotion workforce, particularly in light of recent support for a new medical school in the state".

AHPA calls on all politicians to reject a narrow sighted view of health and encourage sustainable funding for prevention and health promotion to keep Australia profitable and healthy into the future.

Contact:

Melinda EDMUNDS State President – Western Australia 0424 378 283

Gemma CRAWFORD National President 0411 777 795

ENDS