

The health of people with intellectual disability – commitments sought from the Liberal National Coalition

The population

450,000 people in Australia have intellectual disability. Including their families, two million Australians are impacted.

Stark and costly health inequalities

Compared with the general population, people with intellectual disability experience:

- Over twice the rate of avoidable deaths: 38 – 53% avoidable deaths.
- Lower rates of preventative healthcare and illness detection.
- Twice the rate of emergency department and hospital admissions.

Health professionals face challenges communicating with people with intellectual disability, distinguishing health problems from the disability, and diagnosing complex health conditions.

Two key gaps

Primary Health Networks (PHNs) are meant to help GPs improve health care for disadvantaged groups. But they lack any substantial focus on people with intellectual disability.

University medical schools provide an average of 2.6 hours teaching focused on intellectual disability health. The majority of nursing schools provide no teaching on intellectual disability.

What we have sought

1. A specific funded program in each Primary Health Network to improve the capacity and efficiency of GPs and other primary health services.
2. Curriculum enhancement in medical and nursing schools.
3. A national inquiry to decide next steps.

Projected cost savings from proposed actions

- Illness prevention and timely and accurate diagnosis and treatment, resulting in a reduction of hospitalisations of people with chronic or acute conditions.
- Reduced NDIS costs \$100 million a year.

Commitments to date by the parties for the next 3 years

- Labor – Pilot programs in 4 PHNs and curriculum enhancement in 4 universities. \$9.5m.
- The Greens – Full implementation of our asks. \$50m
- LNP coalition (Minister Greg Hunt) – A roundtable to “inform consideration of action”.
- Cross party support for the disability Royal Commission which can consider health neglect.

Minimum we now seek from the LNP coalition

A strong and clear commitment to action after the roundtable including to devote at least \$9.5m to action over the next 3 years.

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