**VMAG Victorian Election 2014 campaign**

VMAG is encouraging all members and interested parties to contact candidates standing in the upcoming Victorian election and to ask them what they are going to do to preserve universal access to Medicare.

VMAG encourages people to focus these questions to candidates in the 22 most marginal seats.

This information pack gives you suggestions as to who you can target, what questions you can ask and provides key messages to help you understand the issue and to convey your message.

If you do meet with a local candidate, please let us know who and what their responses were.

Vic.medicare.action@gmail.com

For more information on VMAG and why we feel so strongly about preserving universal access to Medicare, please see our website: <http://vicmedicareactiongroup.weebly.com/>

**Four Key Questions**

You might like to ask all candidates the following four questions:

1. Do you support the federal government reducing public hospital funding by $1.8b, leaving the states to make up the shortfall or drastically reduce services?
2. Do you support the $7 Medicare co-payment for GP services proposed in the federal Budget?
3. If you support a GP co-payment how do you propose to manage the increased load on emergency departments and community health services in your electorate as a result of patients deferring seeing a doctor early, before they become acutely ill?
4. How will you promote greater emphasis in our health system on prevention and promoting health if the GP co-payment and hospital and other cuts come in?

**Ten Key Messages**

These key messages are to help you understand more about the issue and why VMAG feels so strongly about universal access to Medicare. For more information, see our website, in particular the two Parliamentary submissions we have recently made.

1. Australians already make a contribution to Medicare via the tax system. It is not a free system.
2. The proposed $7 Medicare co-payment fee will further disadvantage those who already have the poorest health outcomes and least access to primary healthcare services - people who already have a very difficult time making ends meet and covering costs associated with their health.
3. $7 co-payments will likely see people defer seeking healthcare, resulting in more expensive treatments being needed later and further overcrowding of emergency departments. Those with chronic illnesses; people on low incomes; people living in rural and remote areas; young families; and older Australians are all going to suffer as a result of tonight’s announcement.
4. Patient out of pocket expenses are increasing rapidly and already represent 22% of health spending; before the inclusion of a further co-payment.
5. Recent data collated by the Commonwealth Fund[[1]](#footnote-1) shows that Australian consumers are already contributing a larger part of the health bill than their counterparts in most other developed western countries. People are already paying out of pocket expenses for private hospitals, primary care services, PBS medicines, non PBS medicines, dental services and aids and appliances. These out of pocket expenses are on top of additional costs often experienced by people with chronic diseases and disabilities that also generally have lower earning power.
6. All developed countries recognise that spending on prevention ie GPs and related services is the best way to address hospital overcrowding.
7. The introduction of $7 co-payments will likely see people defer seeking healthcare, resulting in more expensive treatments being needed later or further overcrowding of emergency departments.
8. There are other ways to raise funds to cover health care costs - numerous reports and surveys have shown Australians would be prepared to pay higher taxes in order to ensure access to health services. There are also significant areas where waste in the system can be addressed to save money.
9. Universal access to health care recognises not only the importance of prevention in terms of health of individuals but the health of the broader community. We are all at risk if people do not gain the healthcare they need, the obvious example being contagious diseases.
10. Changes in federal funding of public hospitals announced in the 2014-15 federal budget will put extra financial pressure on the states. It means the public hospital funding model agreed to under the Rudd Government, under which the federal government pledged to meet 45 per cent of the growth in costs initially and 50 per cent after 2017, will cease from July 2017.

**Victorian Election 2014 Marginal Seats**

For more information on the above seats see: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/victoria-election-2014-the-marginal-seats-that-could-decide-the-state-election-20140910-10exbb.html>

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| Albert Park  | Held by: Martin Foley, ALPContenders: Shannon Eeles (LIB) David Collis (GRN) |
| Bellarine | Held by: Lisa Neville, ALP Contenders: Ron Nelson (LIB), Brenton Peake (GRN) |
| Bendigo East | Held by: Jacinta Allan, ALPContenders: Greg Bickley (LIB), Jennifer Alden (GRN) |
| Bendigo West | Held by: Maree Edwards, ALPContenders: Michael Langdon (LIB), John Brownstein (GRN) |
| Bentleigh | Held by: Elizabeth Miller, LIBContenders: Nick Staikos (ALP), Sean Mulcahy (GRN) |
| Buninyong  | Held by: Geoff Howard, ALPContenders: Ben Taylor (LIB), Tony Goodfellow (GRN), Sonia Smith (NAT) |
| Carrum | Held by: Donna Bauer, LIBContenders: Sonya Kilkenny (ALP) |
| Cranbourne | Held by: Jude Perera, ALPContenders: Geoff Ablett (LIB) |
| Eltham | Held by: ALPContenders: Vicky Ward (ALP), Steve Briffa (LIBERAL) |
| Euroa  | Held by: NATContenders: Steph Ryan (NAT), Tony Schneider (LIB), Clare Malcolm (ALP) |
| Frankston | Held by: Geoff Shaw, INDContenders: Paul Edbrooke (ALP), Sean Armistead (LIB), Jeanette Swain (GRN) |
| Ivanhoe | Held by: Anthony Carbines, ALPContenders: Carl Ziebell (LIB), Paul Kennedy (GRN) |
| Macedon | Held by: ALPContenders: Mary-Anne Thomas (ALP). Donna Petrovich (LIB), Neil Barker (GRN) |
| Melbourne | Held by: Jennifer Kanis, ALPContenders: Ellen Sandell (GRN) |
| Monbulk | Held by: James Merlino, ALPContenders: Mark Verschuur (LIB), Mike Clarke (GRN) |
| Mordialloc | Held by: Lorraine Wreford, LIBContenders: Tim Richardson (ALP), Alex Breskin (GRN) |
| Morwell  | Held by: Russell Northe, NATContenders: Jadon Mintern (ALP), Daniel Caffrey (GRN) |
| Mulgrave  | Held by: Daniel Andrews, ALPContenders: Robert Davies (LIB) |
| Prahran | Held by: Clem Newton-Brown, LIBContenders: Neil Pharoah (ALP), Sam Hibbins (GRN) |
| Ripon | Held by: ALPContenders: Scott Turner (NAT), Louise Staley (LIB), Daniel McGlone (ALP), Rod May (GRN) |
| Wendouree | Held by: Sharon Knight, ALPContenders: Craig Coltman (LIB), Alice Barnes (GRN) |
| Yan Yean | Held by: Danielle Green, ALP Contenders: Sam Ozturk (LIB), Daniel Sacchero (GRN) |

1. Commonwealth Fund (2013) Comparisons of Health Systems Data, cited in Consumers Health Forum of Australia (2014) Submission to Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Bill 2014. https://www.chf.org.au/pdfs/chf/CHF-Submission\_Inquiry-into-PBS-CoPayments.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)