



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Minister for Health

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister
for the Public Service and Cabinet

TRANSCRIPT

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DOORSTOP PERTH

E&OE...

Topics: New CliniKids Clinic; Healthcare for children with autism; AMA's Private Health Insurance Report Card; Mental health

GREG HUNT:

Thanks very much to Celia and to Jonathan Carapetis and to everybody.

CliniKids is about giving beautiful young children with autism the best chance at the best life.

We've been able to invest \$600,000, but the public has contributed, the institute has contributed, the annual Telethon has contributed to the institute.

And above all else, this is about ensuring that not just Perth, not just Western Australia, but that Australia as a whole is at the global leadership in helping to diagnose, to treat and to provide pathways for beautiful young children with autism.

And we're just immensely privileged to have Professor Andrew Whitehouse lead this program with his extraordinary team and to see a gorgeous young child such as Florence, or Floss as her parents called her, thriving, having evolved, made progress in the last year, is to see something that really matters, and that's the point. CliniKids really matters.

It's about better hope, better treatment and a better pathway for children with neurodevelopmental challenges. But this will change lives and improve lives.

JOURNALIST:

Minister, Professor Whitehouse was saying to us earlier that the current model of clinical care in this area is broken he believes, and that the demand for this facility will be very large and obviously, outstrip supply.

What is your- what will you do to solve that issue? Would you agree with him first of all and how do we rectify that?

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

GREG HUNT:

Well we're always striving to provide better treatment and better care and so I welcome Andrew's comments.

We're doing a series of things. One, when we came to Government, autism was not part of the NDIS and we included it and one of the things that in twenty years' time I'll be most personally pleased about is having played a role in that because of my own history and experiences in this space.

Two, we launched together with Professor Andrew Whitehouse the Standardised National Clinical Guidelines.

Three, through the \$3 million which is going into the investigative grant here, then through the \$3 million approximately which is going to Monash University, we're helping to drive new research into autism.

And now we're also supporting CliniKids leading nationally with that, its work through our investment today.

So we're always seeking new ideas, better pathways and one of the things that I will be raising with the state health ministers is to seek their support for state educational services to have better, stronger pathways for Children with autism going forwards.

JOURNALIST:

Do you see a national rollout of this kind of thing (inaudible)?

GREG HUNT:

I would like to see far more uptake around the country of the CliniKids model.

It's not confined to a particular therapy, it's about bringing together the right therapy for the particular needs of the child and that's what's exciting about it.

It's like a multidisciplinary team in other medical fields where they're working together to find the right outcome and the right treatment for each particular child, based on their needs.

JOURNALIST:

Nationally and globally, where does CliniKids sit would you say?

GREG HUNT:

CliniKids is at the global forefront of treatment for autism. I have to say Celia, what you have here is world leading, world class and life changing.

Okay. Thank you very much.

JOURNALIST:

Can I ask a question about another issue, is that alright?

GREG HUNT:

Yes, of course.

JOURNALIST:

I just wanted to get your comments on the AMA's Private Health Insurance Report Card today, the comments that the system was on the precipice and young people not taking out private health insurance and that the reforms have failed to make a difference to solve the issues.

GREG HUNT:

Private health is any most important part of the Australian system.

We believe in it deeply and we've embarked on one of the largest reforms in recent decades.

That has involved better access for patients with mental health, better access for patients in rural areas and better support for young people to come in.

And we've done that because we believe in it. Unfortunately, the Labor Party took a policy to the election which would have taken over \$100 million out of private health insurance and reduced the rebate for tens of thousands of Australians, particularly older Australians, and that in our view was an unacceptable assault on private health.

So we want to work with the doctors, the private health insurers, and the hospitals to provide more options and better options for patients, including looking at ways we can ensure that hospital in the home is for the first time covered.

So a willingness to provide the services, not just in hospital, but hospital continuity services out of hospital, and these are the very things we're working on now.

Our reforms delivered the lowest change in private health insurance premiums in 18 years, more than 40 per cent below what they were under Labor.

So we've made huge steps, but I welcome today's report, and we'll continue to work with the medical sector to make it even more affordable and to make it even more understandable and beneficial for families.

JOURNALIST:

Do you accept any of what the AMA's saying or do you reject that?

GREG HUNT:

I believe that the sustainability of private health insurance is an immensely important task.

One of the first things that I did on coming in was to embark upon what was a contested challenged wave of reform, because it did challenge some of the hospitals, and did challenge some of the private health insurers, and it did challenge some in the medical community.

And the result was the lowest round of premium changes in 18 years, but better access and coverage for mental health and other patients which has improved the quality.

But my view and my challenge to the sector is to help us improve the quality and the outcomes more.

And so I do want to work with them and I'm inviting them to work with us.

And I thank them for that.

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

JOURNALIST:

Do you agree with the Productivity Commission's recommendations that preschool students should be checked for mental health illnesses, and is it safe to test students that young?

GREG HUNT:

So I want to welcome the work of the Productivity Commission.

I understand there are 88 recommendations, and I've had the opportunity to be briefed both by the authors and the president of the commission.

This is a draft report, so it goes out to comment and we'll wait to see the final recommendations.

But what we know is that there are 4 million Australians with mental health challenge, and that at any one time, it can be profoundly distressing for themselves and their family.

Today, I'll be meeting with the state health ministers and inviting them to partner with the national government in a once in a generation transformation of the Australian mental health system.

We want to have a single unified mental health system, so it's easy to understand and people can get the services they need, when they need them, where they need them.

JOURNALIST:

As it stands, are mental health services adequate at the moment? Is the Government doing enough right now?

GREG HUNT:

My view is that together we can always do more.

We've recently injected \$375 million into headspace.

It's part of a \$500 million national youth and suicide prevention package for mental health. Things that are incredibly important, work with Indigenous Australians.

So it's the largest ever youth mental health and suicide prevention package. But there's more to be done, is my view.

This is an ongoing and great national task and by inviting the states to be part of a once in a decade transformation to bring together mental health into a single national and unified scheme, where the Commonwealth and the states share responsibility.

And from the public's perspective, they don't see the difference. They just know I go to the GP, I go to headspace, I can go to the hospital, and after discharge, I can be supported afterwards.

JOURNALIST:

What did you make of the figure that the Productivity Commission claimed that mental health is costing the economy?

GREG HUNT:

Well the total cost that the Productivity Commission identified in direct consequences and then in terms of quality of life and years lost is approximately \$180 billion, and I think that that is likely to be an accurate reflection of the costs, and it accords with our view that this is one of the great national tasks.

I have to say, on election night, at about 10 pm, the Prime Minister called me and he asked me about one thing and said, you know, there's just one thing, one thing I want to focus on above all else with you this term, and that is if we can work together on mental health and suicide prevention, particularly for youth, but for all Australians together.

And at the very moment of what was his most extraordinary success, the thing he was focused on was mental health.

Thank you very much.

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