



24 July 2025

The Hon Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Butler,

OPEN LETTER: Urgent Call to Reprioritise National Health Literacy and Consumer Engagement Strategies

As members of the Australian Self-Care Alliance, we write to express our deep concern about the apparent lack of progress in the development and implementation of the **National Health Literacy Strategy** and the **National Consumer Engagement Strategy for Health and Wellbeing**, outlined as immediate priorities for action in the **National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030**.

Both strategies are critical to strengthening Australia's preventive health system, and targeted consultation on their development began several years ago. The community and health sector have engaged in good faith throughout this process, and correspondence with the Prevention and Wellbeing Policy Section of the Department of Health and Aged Care indicated public consultation would progress in 2023. Yet there has been no action since 2022, and further delays risk undermining confidence in the Government's commitment to prevention and equity.

This delay is especially concerning as health literacy and meaningful consumer engagement have never been more important. Australia's health profile has changed significantly over the past 40 years and is now characterised by a high burden of chronic illness¹, and widening health inequities². Without a national strategy and implementation action plan, these inequities will deepen, and opportunities to reduce preventable disease and healthcare costs will be lost³. This highlights the urgent need to support consumers in self-care practices—building their capability to navigate the health system and participate in decision-making at both individual and system levels⁴.

We urge the Australian Government to **reprioritise and expedite the delivery of these strategies** to ensure:

- **Stronger and purposeful partnerships** with consumers in shaping policies, co-designing services, and ensuring preventive health initiatives reflect their lived experience.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australia's health*, "Reports & data," released 2 July 2024, accessed 16 July 2025, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-health>.

² Australian Government Department of Health. *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030*. Canberra: Australian Government, 2021. https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/12/national-preventive-health-strategy-2021-2030_1.pdf.

³ Ibid.

⁴ World Health Organization, "Self-Care Health Interventions," fact sheet, last reviewed 1 May 2024, accessed 16 July 2025, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/self-care-health-interventions>.



- **Improved health outcomes** through easier access to clear, culturally safe, and actionable health information to make informed decisions.
- **A sustainable and resilient health system** that empowers Australians to play an active role in their own health and wellbeing.

We commend the Government's commitment to prevention in the ***National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030***, but the momentum for health literacy and consumer engagement must not be lost. The time to act is now.

We stand ready to support the Government in advancing this critical work and ensuring the strategies are progressed and implemented without further delay.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sharon Lawn
Director,
On behalf of the Board of Australian Self-Care Alliance

The Australian Self-Care Alliance member

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| ❖ Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association | ❖ Life Education Australia |
| ❖ AusEE Inc | ❖ Lived Experience Australia |
| ❖ Australian Patients Association | ❖ Medibank Private |
| ❖ Client Focused Evaluation Program Surveys | ❖ Musculoskeletal Health Australia |
| ❖ Consumer Healthcare Products Australia | ❖ NT Mental Health Coalition |
| ❖ Genetic Alliance Australia | ❖ Pain Australia |
| ❖ HCF | ❖ People and Parks Foundation |
| ❖ Health Coaches Australia New Zealand | ❖ Pharmaceutical Society of Australia |
| ❖ Hearts4Heart | ❖ Roses in the Ocean |
| ❖ Honeysuckle Health | |

CC:

Senator the Hon Jenny McAllister, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Hon Sam Rae MP, Minister for Aged Care and Seniors

The Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health

The Hon Rebecca White MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health, Assistant Minister for Women