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New poll shows strong support for Rudd 'health revolution' with more workers the number one priority

New polling by the ACTU shows that working Australians are worried that our health system is getting worse and not better and improving Australia's hospitals and healthcare system is now the top national issue.

The major new national poll of 1,000 respondents released today finds strong support for the Rudd Government's planned 'health revolution'.

Almost eight out of ten Australians support the Government's move to fund hospitals nationally and have boards of doctors, nurses and other health professionals manage the day to day running of hospitals.

The poll, conducted by Auspoll and commissioned by the ACTU, is part of a renewed union push to improve the lives of working Australians through better wages and conditions and a lift in important services such as healthcare and superannuation.

ACTU Secretary Jeff Lawrence will today (Wednesday) address the National Press Club and outline proposals for improved healthcare, education, fairer taxation and a lift in superannuation as part of a new union vision for a 'social wage'.

"This poll shows Australians are concerned about the shift towards user pays in recent years and want more government funding so that all Australians have access to quality healthcare," said Mr Lawrence.

"They particularly want to see more support for the doctors, nurses and other health professionals who staff our hospitals with reforms that reduce the pressure on health workers.

"And they want the State and Federal Governments to fix up the duplication of responsibilities between them, introducing stronger national standards of care for patients.

"It is time to review the social wage to address increasing inequality in Australia — starting with better health and aged care," Mr Lawrence said.

The poll was conducted by Auspoll and commissioned by the ACTU. Key findings include:

- 45% say the quality of the healthcare system in Australia is getting worse and only 17% say it is getting better with 38% say it is staying the same.
- The need to improve Australia's hospital and healthcare system is the top issue of concern with 91% rating it very or extremely important.
- Funding hospitals nationally, but having local boards of doctors, nurses and other health professionals who manage the day to day running of hospitals – 76% support and 5% oppose
- Creating national standards for the delivery of care to hospital patients – 86% support
- 72% want to see less users pays to fund healthcare and an increase in the proportion of government funding.

The poll finds strong support for more health workers with 'Having enough doctors, nurses and other health professionals' the most worrying healthcare issue, ahead of 'waiting times in emergency departments' and 'the overall efficiency of the health care system' in that order.

82% of respondents agree the Government should try to attract more qualified nurses and other healthcare professionals by improving pay and conditions in the sector.

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