



Council for the Australian
Federation

MEETING COMMUNIQUE

23 August 2022

The Council for the Australian Federation (CAF) met on 23 August 2022 and had a productive discussion about opportunities to work across all levels of government to alleviate ongoing pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic and drive meaningful long-term reform that supports all Australians.

Skills shortages and skilled migration

CAF noted that states and territories are continuing to experience significant workforce challenges which have been exacerbated by Australia's COVID-19 response.

CAF agreed to seek a commitment from the Commonwealth Government that it will engage constructively with states and territories to alleviate immediate skills shortages across several critical industries and consider long-term migration reform.

Update on the National Cabinet taskings of CAF priorities

CAF noted that the 17 June National Cabinet taskings to First Secretaries to provide advice on improved care pathways (particularly primary health and the hospital interfaces), and on the role of Ministerial Councils implements the agreed 2022 CAF priorities to undertake healthcare reform and review the operation of our federation.

CAF agreed that states and territories will continue to progress these CAF priorities through the National Cabinet taskings and consider whether progressing further work in these areas is required after the outcomes are clear.

CAF agreed that there is potential alignment of National Cabinet's work on improved care pathways and the Commonwealth Government's recently established Strengthening Medicare Taskforce. CAF agreed to undertake further work to outline the structural inefficiencies associated with current hospital interfaces and their costs, with a clear differentiation between Medicare and hospitals.

Disaster recovery funding arrangements

CAF agreed that changes are needed to improve the efficiency of disaster recovery processes, to simplify and speed up payments to disaster victims and repairs to damaged infrastructure.

CAF agreed a set of recommendations to improve disaster recovery funding arrangements, building on lessons learned from NSW and Qld floods. CAF also agreed to put these recommendations to the Commonwealth for consideration and implementation in partnership with states and territories.

COVID-19 measures

CAF noted the expiry of COVID-19 supports on 30 September 2022, including the pandemic leave disaster payment and Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) support for pathology (PCR) testing and agreed the CAF Chair will raise these issues including isolation periods and mask wearing on planes at the next National Cabinet meeting.