

## *MEDIA RELEASE – 23.09.2014*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Changes in health system must protect vulnerable**

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The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) warns the government not to destroy the fundamental building blocks of well-being in Australia by gutting the health system.

The AASW has today joined a wide range of organisations calling on the Government to show leadership in health funding and ensure that decisions take into account the health of everyone in the community, particularly the most vulnerable.

The organisations, headed by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), have signed a statement addressing alarming changes being proposed in the area of health without significant community discussion about the implications, such as the proposed GP co-payment.

“Organisations who have signed up to today’s statement remain opposed to any form of GP co-payment - even one with exemptions as this does not go far enough to ensure that those who most need healthcare are not faced with cost barriers,” says ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie.

AASW National President Professor Karen Healy says “We are concerned that these proposals may further disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those with chronic illness and older members of our community. These groups need to be supported to access the services they need, rather than facing additional barriers to access.

“I am proud the AASW has come together with other organisations to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the health system. We call on the Government and the Parliament to focus on evidence, to lead for all Australians and not be tempted to introduce short term fixes to expenditure which will only cost more in the long term.

“We should not compromise our universal health service. Once it is changed it will be difficult to reclaim.”

A copy of the statement and signatories can be found at [www.acoss.org.au/](http://www.acoss.org.au/).

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