

AHHA Federal Election Statement



The future of Australian health care should not be defined by our challenges, but by the way we respond to them... with people and communities at the centre.

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is calling for all parties to commit to a health system that delivers the outcomes that matter to people and communities, sustainably and equitably.

Creating a health system that delivers the outcomes Australians deserve will require team-based and integrated care, embedding evaluation and innovation in health, and strengthening the health workforce.

What are the issues?

The establishment of Medicare revolutionised health care in Australia, with a focus on providing universal access to the health care people need, when they need it.

Almost four decades have passed and much has changed; in both the health conditions that people manage and in the way care can be delivered. However, Australian health policies have not kept pace with change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated inequities in Australia's health. Our most vulnerable Australians have not had access to the care they deserve.

We know that gaps in health equity will only widen if we do not also turn our attention to health care that has been delayed or deferred during the pandemic.

However, health services have faced inconsistent communication, greater administrative burden and escalating workloads without timely support and resources.

Expectations of reverting to 'business as usual' are unrealistic if health outcome and inequities are to be improved.

Yet, while the pandemic has driven many changes in the way care is delivered and provided opportunities for innovation, transitioning the healthcare workforce and services to new and different ways of working remains an ongoing challenge.

What is the solution?

Understanding what matters to people, and how the Australian healthcare system can innovatively and sustainably respond are essential for health system reform.

Government must introduce approaches to health care that provide value over volume; they must consider the population's health, while ensuring that people and communities, including our most vulnerable, are placed at the centre of care. They must deliver health system reform that considers the workforce and its sustainability, and supports universal health care in a post-pandemic era.

AHHA is calling on parties to...

1. Measure and report what matters

Health data needs to accurately reflect care outcomes and be in the right format, timely and of sufficient quality to discern critical relationships between investment and results, as appropriate, for different audiences and purposes. It needs to both support decisions within care relationships and inform improvements in performance through all levels of the health system.

Despite the importance of health information and reporting, and the substantial data currently being collected, Australia has not implemented a long-term strategic plan to coordinate and direct national health information interests.

This requires commitment to:

- a. Prioritising development of the **National Health Information Strategy** as an enduring framework that will consolidate health information, promote cross-sector linkages, and promote efficient, timely and consistent data collection and reporting.

The scope of the Strategy should involve co-designing a consistent approach to measuring the outcomes that matter to people and communities to support decisions within care relationships, as well as inform improvements in performance through all levels of the system.

Implementation must be adequately resourced.

- b. Establishing data standards, **ICT architecture** and analytical and reporting capability to provide timely collection and reporting of data to inform decisions within care relationships and for accountability across the health system.

2. Build a sustainable and resilient health workforce incentivised to achieve person-centred care and meet population needs

Through the pandemic, the flexibility and responsiveness of the health workforce has been further challenged, exposing structural and systemic weaknesses in the way Australia's health workforce is organised.

Investment in a sustainable and resilient health workforce requires:

- a. Establishing a national **health workforce reform strategy** that goes beyond the adequacy and distribution of the workforce as it currently exists. It must incorporate clinical and non-clinical roles to pursue outcomes-focused and value-based changes in scopes of practice that meet the needs of Australians.
- b. Supporting and resourcing **clinician leadership** to collectively and critically evaluate full care pathways, including how they intersect with health and social care. Regional accountability and authority would need to be enabled to effect changes to pathways, with incentives for improving outcomes for people and communities.
- c. Enabling **team-based models of care** linked to regional needs assessments and population health planning, where there is effective clinical governance for each team member to work to the top of their scope of practice.

3. Provide stewardship and support that enables regional innovation and reform

Supporting health services to shift to outcomes-focused, value-based models of care, requires simplifying access to available evidence, and improving utilisation of regional expertise, experience, and relationships to develop models appropriate for their context.

Single sector approaches, uncoordinated and small scale pilots and a lack of outcomes reporting limits meaningful progress.

Investment in national stewardship requires:

- a. A framework and implementation plan for **evaluating** health care services consistently in terms of the outcomes they achieve for people and communities. This would allow comparisons across models of care, populations and geographies for scaling up trials and models of care in the Australian context.
- b. A central repository of evidence, resources and case studies to enable services to transition successfully and efficiently through the necessary system changes to a value-based approach to health care.

More information can be found in the AHHA [Blueprint for outcomes-focused, value-based health care](#).

You can also access our position statements on:

- [Universal health care](#)
- [A National Health Information Strategy](#)
- [Health workforce](#)
- [Rural and remote health](#).

4. Use funding models that incentivise improved health outcomes for people and communities

Security and certainty in health care funding is critical to attract and retain the necessary workforce for care delivery; and for service providers and communities to trust and invest in the co-design of pathways of care.

In this regard, mixed, flexible funding models in health can be used to adequately compensate for activity, protect equity and reward and incentivise agreed performance standards and outcomes.

Trials and pilot projects, particularly in rural areas, are used as tools for informing service innovation. However, such short-term funding approaches ignore evidence for the factors required for models to be successful and sustainable.

Funding for better health outcomes requires commitment to:

- a. Introduce **mixed, flexible funding models** to reward high value care in the way health care is delivered, particularly where continuity of care is important. This would require design processes that recognise where the costs, risks and rewards of providing care differently are borne. It would include supporting dedicated time for population health planning and developing team-based models of care, maintaining a focus on the desired individual and population health outcomes for the resources available.
- b. Protecting equity through **longer-term funding** approaches for rural and remote health care reform. This should be underpinned by strong governance, accountability for achieving defined goals and outcomes, and clear expectations for social stewardship. It should involve a continuous co-design process between stakeholders, with innovative models of care iteratively and transparently adjusted throughout implementation to address localised health needs.

Shifting to a more outcomes-focused, value-based health care requires a government that will:

1

**Measure and
report what
matters**



2



**Build a
sustainable
and resilient
health
workforce**

3



**Provide
stewardship and
support that
enables regional
innovation and
reform**

4

**Use funding
models that
incentivise
improved
health
outcomes**



AHHA has been the national voice for public health care for more than 70 years, maintaining its vision for an effective, innovative and sustainable health system where all Australians have equitable access to health care of the highest standard when and where they need it. AHHA is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, community and primary healthcare services.