

# Health Policy Scorecard

## HEALTH IS A KEY ELECTION ISSUE FOR AUSTRALIANS

A high quality healthcare system is key to a healthy population and a strong economy. Medicare and our public healthcare and hospital sectors provide a solid foundation for universal access to quality healthcare services, and rightfully require ongoing renewal to ensure they meet contemporary and future health needs of all Australians. The AHHA analysed the health policies of the national political parties to assess their ongoing support for a high-performing health sector – here are the results.

	 		
A commitment to <b>UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE PRINCIPLES</b>	X	✓✓	✓✓
A commitment to <b>LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING</b>	O	✓✓	✓✓
Policies to support <b>INTEGRATION</b>	✓	✓	✓
A commitment to <b>PREVENTIVE CARE</b>	?	✓	?
A commitment to <b>QUALITY OUTCOMES</b>	O	✓	O
Policies to support <b>INNOVATION</b>	✓	✓	?
A commitment to <b>WORKING WITH THE STATES AND TERRITORIES</b>	O	✓	✓

- ✓ positive
- X negative
- O neutral
- ? absence of policy

-  significant deterioration in health policy direction
-  significant improvement in health policy direction



“Coalition policies have made some amends for the damaging cuts in the 2014 Budget. However, some policies continue to exacerbate issues of access, equity and sustainability.” [AHHA](#)



“Labor supports universal care and is working toward a more sustainable health system. Further development of reform proposals will be important.” [AHHA](#)



“Greens strongly support universal healthcare and have announced positive policy proposals, but gaps exist.” [AHHA](#)

Source: Scorecard analysis was based on publicly announced policies made up to 20 June 2016 and information provided to AHHA by the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens. All major national parties were invited to provide details on their health policies to address these seven domains. The assessments presented here are based on analysis undertaken by a broad cross-section of invited health professionals and the AHHA. This scorecard was developed on the basis that announced policies will be acted upon and appropriately funded.



# Health Policy Scorecard

Ongoing renewal and reform are features of the Australian health system, driven both by budget pressures and a desire for system improvement. Australians place high value on universal access to a quality health system. To meet this expectation, the incoming 45th Commonwealth Parliament must ensure its health policies and reforms will continue to support an effective, accessible, equitable and sustainable healthcare system focused on quality outcomes.

Australia's healthcare system consistently outperforms many OECD countries when comparing key health indicators and costs, but challenges such as an ageing population, increased rates of chronic and complex disease, increased consumer expectations and new medical technologies and treatments are increasing the cost and complexity of healthcare. The challenge is to manage the delivery of care as effectively and efficiently as possible, while governments ensure the necessary resources are made available to deliver this care.

Much of the recent focus for health policy discourse in Australia has been on economics, funding and the importance of building sustainability into the Australian healthcare system. The economics of healthcare and a healthy population contributing to the economy underpinned the establishment of Medicare more than 30 years ago, and it is timely that Australians and the health sector refocus efforts on ensuring our healthcare system retains the capacity to support accessible universal healthcare into the future.

Strong and strategic leadership is needed from the Australian Government and the 45th Commonwealth Parliament to address these challenges together with state and territory governments.

AHHA developed its *Australian Election 2016 Health Policy Scorecard* to inform its members, the health sector and the public on how the national political parties compare when considering:

**A commitment to  
UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE PRINCIPLES**

**A commitment to  
LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING**

**Policies to support  
INTEGRATION**

**A commitment to  
PREVENTIVE CARE**

**A commitment to  
QUALITY OUTCOMES**

**Policies to support  
INNOVATION**

**A commitment to  
WORKING WITH THE  
STATES AND TERRITORIES**

AHHA members representing the broad spectrum of the health sector analysed the publicly announced policies of the major national parties, as well as information provided to AHHA by the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Greens, against these criteria. All major national parties were invited to provide details on their health policies to address these seven domains.

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, primary health networks, community and primary healthcare services, and advocates for universal, high quality and affordable healthcare to benefit the whole community.

# Health Policy Scorecard

## COMMITMENT TO UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE PRINCIPLES

Australia's public healthcare system is being severely tested by uncoordinated reforms along with mounting financial strain and increasing demand. Although Australians have had access to universal health care for more than 30 years, our system is not immune to pressures such as an ageing population, a growing burden of chronic disease and escalating healthcare costs associated with new technology and treatments. Strong and strategic leadership is needed from the Australian Government to address these challenges together with the state and territory governments to preserve universal healthcare.

Support for:	 		
MEDICARE PRINCIPLES	O	✓✓	✓✓
UNIVERSAL ACCESS	X	✓✓	✓✓
RURAL AND REMOTE ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES	?	O	✓✓
CLOSING THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH GAP	?	✓	✓
PUBLIC DENTAL AND ORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS	O	O	✓
✓ positive      O neutral X negative      ? absence of policy   significant deterioration in health policy direction  significant improvement in health policy direction			

“Funding cut backs in Coalition policies for public healthcare will ultimately impact those who can ill afford to pay.” [Hospital representative](#)

“There is recognition by all parties as to the disadvantaged and under-served groups in respect to health policy. However, there is little policy detail as to how the major discrepancies in health outcomes for these groups will be addressed.” [Primary healthcare representative](#)

“The impact of policies freezing payment indexation and instituting co-payments for health services undermines Australia’s universal healthcare system.” [AHHA](#)

# Health Policy Scorecard

## COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The Australian public healthcare system needs to be adequately funded in a sustainable and durable way, providing certainty for longer-term funding arrangements for the Commonwealth, states and territories. The overriding objective of the public healthcare system should be to ensure high quality care that is equitable, accessible and affordable. Health budget sustainability must include the concept of affordability for consumers and acknowledge capacity to pay and individual health vulnerability. Existing resources should be used effectively with all parts of the health system working together to eliminate waste, inefficiencies and to limit low value care.

Support for:	 		
COMMONWEALTH, STATE AND TERRITORY FUNDING AGREEMENT	O	✓	✓
INDEPENDENT HOSPITAL PRICING AUTHORITY AND ACTIVITY-BASED FUNDING	✓	✓	✓
BUNDLED CARE PAYMENTS AND OUTCOMES BASED FUNDING	✓	✓✓	✓✓
CEASE AD HOC FREEZING OF INDEXATION	X	✓✓	✓✓
COMPETITIVE PRICES FOR PHARMACEUTICALS	O	?	?
✓ positive      O neutral X negative      ? absence of policy   significant deterioration in health policy direction  significant improvement in health policy direction			

“The negotiating power of the Commonwealth needs to be used more effectively to purchase pharmaceuticals at more competitive prices, so hospitals are not paying more than what has been negotiated for supply through the PBS.”  
 Pharmacy representative

“Policy announcements on innovative models of patient-centred, integrated care, such as the Health Care Home, are welcome. The Coalition’s approach is short on funding compared with Labor’s Your Family Doctor proposal.”  
 AHHA

“The Australian Healthcare Reform Commission has the potential to be a positive force for health system reform. However, independence in the pricing of hospital services must be maintained via the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority.” AHHA

# Health Policy Scorecard

## POLICIES TO SUPPORT INTEGRATION

A whole-of-system approach to reform is needed to ensure Australians with multiple care needs are able to access the services they require with minimal difficulty. As our population ages and rates of chronic disease continues to rise, more and more Australians will find themselves in need of multiple types of care. Greater integration of services across the sector will ensure better service delivery, improve efficiency and better health outcomes.

Policies which support:	 		
<b>COORDINATION BETWEEN THE PRIMARY, ACUTE, COMMUNITY AND AGED CARE SECTORS</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING</b>	○	○	○
<b>SAFE, INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED PATIENT-</b>	✓	✓✓	✓✓
✓ positive      ○ neutral ✗ negative      ? absence of policy   significant deterioration in health policy direction  significant improvement in health policy direction			

“The tripartite support for the Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and the inclusion of PHNs in policy positions is a positive reflection of the philosophy of each party in coordinated, integrated, patient-centred care.”  
 Primary healthcare representative

“A shortcoming [from the Coalition and Labor] is the patchy commitment towards addressing increasing burden of mental health in the community.”  
 Community healthcare representative

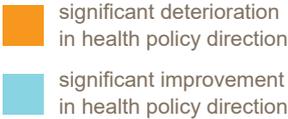
“All three parties support activity-based funding (ABF) and trialling new models of care, but ABF and pledges to trial new care models could go further in targeting outcomes-based funding.” AHHA

# Health Policy Scorecard

## COMMITMENT TO PREVENTIVE CARE

While investing in preventive health measures generates a short term cost, innovative initiatives can also create savings in reduced healthcare costs in the future. With the fourth Intergenerational Report highlighting the pressure that health costs will place on the Commonwealth budget, it is vital that preventive health strategies be encouraged to lessen the individual, intergenerational and health system burden which will otherwise emerge in the future.

Expenditure on preventive health measures can legitimately be viewed as contributing to budget repair by reducing future demand on the health system while simultaneously improving health outcomes for all Australians.

Support for:	 		
IMPROVING CONSUMER HEALTH LITERACY	?	?	?
PREVENTIVE HEALTH PROGRAM FUNDING	X	✓✓	✓
PREVENTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH	?	?	?
✓ positive      ○ neutral X negative      ? absence of policy  			

“The Greens’ active transport policies come closest to true upstream prevention policies, although Labor’s recent announcement is encouraging.” [Hospital representative](#)

“Preventive healthcare does feature in all parties’ policies to some degree with Labor making the most significant investment. However, recent announcements from the Coalition have not been focused on preventive healthcare.” [Primary healthcare representative](#)

“The longstanding multiparty support for immunisation and tobacco strategies needs to be expanded to see all parties supporting broader cohesive strategies and funding for preventive health.” [AHHA](#)

# Health Policy Scorecard

## COMMITMENT TO QUALITY OUTCOMES

Australia’s healthcare system consistently outperforms many other OECD countries when comparing key health indicators and costs, but burdens such as an ageing population, increased rates of chronic and complex disease, rising consumer expectations and new medical technologies and treatments are increasing the cost and complexity of healthcare. Maintaining the status quo and tinkering around the edges of system reform will not provide the future-proofed health system that Australians expect and deserve. Traditional approaches of measuring outputs rather than outcomes does not capture elements of quality and safety, nor does it place the patient at the centre of the care provided, but rather it places the service provision at the centre.

	 		
<p>Policies which support <b>COMMITMENT TO QUALITY OUTCOMES</b></p>	○	✓	○
<p>                     ✓ positive      ○ neutral                      X negative      ? absence of policy   significant deterioration in health policy direction   significant improvement in health policy direction                 </p>			

“The rhetoric is there with the Coalition and the Greens. However, Labor appears to have been the only party to endeavour to clearly articulate how this high-level aspiration can be achieved.”

Primary healthcare representative

“All parties have made a commitment to the health system to a degree. All are committed to delivering high quality healthcare, however, some are prepared to be more fiscally liberal.”

Hospital representative

“The sum of the various policy announcements lead toward supporting accessible and sustainable healthcare with a focus on outcomes. But the details, which are not currently clear, will be key in determining the quality of the outcomes achieved.”

AHHA

# Health Policy Scorecard

## POLICIES TO SUPPORT INNOVATION

Australia has a high quality health system delivering world-class health outcomes. But for some groups health outcomes are poor, and as the population ages, rates of chronic disease increase and consumer demand grows, resulting in increasing pressure on the health system. Innovative approaches to health services delivery, underpinned by a strong evidence base, are needed to respond to these challenges.

Policies which support:	 		
THE IDENTIFICATION, ADDRESSING OR ELIMINATION OF LOW VALUE CARE	✓	✓	○
USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONIC RECORDS	✓	✓	?
CLOSING THE GAP IN INDIGENOUS HEALTH OUTCOMES	?	✓	✓
HEALTH SYSTEM RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION	✓✓	✓✓	?
✓ positive      ○ neutral X negative      ? absence of policy   significant deterioration in health policy direction  significant improvement in health policy direction			

“The Coalition and Labor appear to recognise the need for a workable electronic health record, but neither has a track record, nor detail, on how to achieve this.”

Primary healthcare representative

“Labor’s plans to establish the Australian Healthcare Reform Commission is positive but the specific focuses of the merged entities should not be diluted.”

Hospital representative

“The Coalition’s establishment of the Medical Research Future Fund combined with their commitment to improving access to clinical trials are positive.”

Community healthcare representative

“All parties have identified limited programs to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health issues, but fail to articulate specific strategies to realise the overall Closing the Gap goals.” AHHA

“More coordinated focus is needed on supporting development of our health workforce—a workforce that is utilised to the full scope of their professional expertise, allowing innovation and efficiency in the provision of health services across the primary, acute, aged care and disability sectors.”

AHHA

# Health Policy Scorecard

## COMMITMENT TO WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE STATES AND TERRITORIES

Health care in Australia is provided by both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, there are areas of overlap in the roles and responsibilities in service delivery, policy and funding between Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Governments, all sides of politics and the health sector agree that current arrangements are not working as well as they should and are not financially sustainable to deliver an effective, accessible, equitable and sustainable healthcare system focused on quality outcomes. Strong and strategic leadership is needed from the Australian Government to address these challenges and to work in partnership with state and territory governments.

	 		
<p>Policies which articulate <b>HOW THE COMMONWEALTH WILL WORK COLLABORATIVELY WITH STATE AND TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS</b></p>			
<p>                     ✓ positive      ○ neutral                      ✗ negative      ? absence of policy    significant deterioration in health policy direction   significant improvement in health policy direction                 </p>			

“There is a commitment articulated throughout all the Labor policy announcements to working with the states and territories.”  
 Pharmacy representative

“National health reform must be driven by partnership between governments.”  
 Hospital representative

“The Coalition has taken positive steps to re-establish its relationships with the states and territories. However, there is significant work to be undertaken to rebuild trust and to develop durable partnerships.” AHHA



*the voice of public healthcare®*

## **Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association**

Unit 8, 2 Phipps Close  
Deakin ACT 2601

PO Box 78  
Deakin West ACT 2061

**P.** 02 6162 0780

**F.** 02 6162 0779

**E.** [averhoeven@ahha.asn.au](mailto:averhoeven@ahha.asn.au)

**W.** [www.ahha.asn.au](http://www.ahha.asn.au)

 [@AusHealthcare](https://twitter.com/AusHealthcare)

 [www.facebook.com/Aushealthcare](http://www.facebook.com/Aushealthcare)

 [www.linkedin.com/company/australian-healthcare-&-hospitals-association](http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-healthcare-&-hospitals-association)

**ABN.** 49 008 528 470

© Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, 2016. All rights reserved.  
Released 20 June 2016