

Universal health care more important than ever: remembering Professor John Deeble

8 October 2021

‘As we mark the 3rd anniversary of Professor John Deeble’s death, maintaining maintain Professor Deeble’s vision of the Australian universal health care system is more important now than ever before,’ says AHHA Chief Executive Mr John Gregg.

Often dubbed ‘the father of Medicare’, Professor Deeble was an academic, economist and policy visionary whose passion for health equity was central to the development of Australia’s universal health care scheme Medicare, that so many Australians benefit from today.

‘Over the last 18 months as we have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia’s universal healthcare system has continued to enable all Australians to access care.’

A perspectives brief published today by the AHHA’s Deeble Institute for Health Policy, the research arm of AHHA honouring Professor Deeble and his work, reveals that while COVID-19 has demonstrated that Australia has one of the best health systems in the world, it has also highlighted the impact that some funding decisions have had in erosion of Australia’s universal health care system principles of equity, access and affordability; particularly with vulnerable and marginalised populations who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The brief, titled [Universal Healthcare in Australia: Prof John Deeble’s legacy more relevant than ever](#), reflects on current research which shows that vulnerable populations with higher rates non-communicable disease and poorer access to health services have experienced greater rates of COVID-19 and deaths due to COVID-19 throughout the pandemic.

‘Despite the increased risks and greater exposure to COVID, vaccination rates of vulnerable populations are lagging and more needs to be done to support these communities to protect their health.

‘The brief also reflects on the disruption of health care services and delayed care of non-COVID related conditions caused by the pandemic, which threaten the ability of the health system to effectively provide services and to respond to the occurrence of Long COVID across all populations.

‘As we emerge from the pandemic, the dual impacts of Long COVID and non-COVID related health services that have ceased, or been delayed, will create challenges for our health system, our healthcare workforce and for our vulnerable populations.

‘The principles of universal health care and the legacy of John Deeble’s work will be critical to guiding us out of the pandemic and ensuring all Australians, including our most vulnerable populations have access to the care they deserve,’ says Mr Gregg.

Universal Healthcare in Australia: Prof John Deeble’s legacy more relevant than ever is available [online](#). More information on AHHA and the Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research is available at [ahha.asn.au](#). This media release is available [online](#).

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and community and primary healthcare services.

**Media enquiries: John Gregg, AHHA Chief Executive
0410 931 460**