

The April issue of the Australian Health Review, available online, features articles that, in the context of the upcoming Federal Election, provide valuable insights on the current condition of Australia's healthcare system. This issue takes a closer look at health financing, improving health outcomes for First Nations Australians, digital health and the safety and quality of healthcare in Australia.

'As we head into this Federal Election, health and aged care is on the forefront of many people's minds. While the 2022-23 budget announced record funding in these areas, it is yet to prove if it can provide value over volume when it comes to health spending,' says Australian Health Review Editor-in-Chief, Professor Sonj Hall.

A policy reflection by Stephen Duckett, outgoing Director of the Health and Aged Care Program at the Grattan Institute, is a reminder for parties on key areas sure to be closely watched this election. It calls for parties to focus on areas of the health system further fatigued by COVID such as delayed care, equity gaps in oral healthcare and the health and wellbeing of First Nations Australians.

Maintaining focus on improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ensuring their voices are part of health policy development is crucial for governments in closing the health equity gap for First Nations Australians.

A research project in collaboration with Elders from a remote Aboriginal community in Tasmania examined how they view Closing the Gap programs in improving community health outcomes. Through thematic analysis of individual interviews and yarning circles it was found that Elders viewed these programs as having instrumental value for addressing Aboriginal community disadvantage but also represented a source of ongoing dependency. It was viewed that programs could undermine the community's autonomy, self-determination and cultural foundations.

As demands on the healthcare system continue to grow, now is the time to focus on value-based healthcare and the benefits it can provide for both patients and providers. A perspective from the University of Technology Sydney and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development based in France, tackles an important issue of how current payment structures can be reformed to handle a pivot to value-based healthcare. Current 'fee for service' models promote increased service volume, whereas alternatives covered in this paper involve pooling funds and moves the risk away from the patient to the provider for more efficient use of resources.

Digital health, also covered in this issue of the Australian Health Review, is another rapidly developing sector. As seen during the pandemic, digital health services can be invaluable in delivering care to those who may not be able to access it otherwise. Articles featured include topics of virtual care through infrastructure innovation, electronic medical records systems, and the benefits of telehealth in a paediatric setting.

Articles from the April 2022 AHR can be found [here](#). An online version of this [media release](#) may be found on the [AHHA website](#).

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit healthcare.

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