

‘Long COVID is a growing public health challenge,’ says Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) Chief Executive Kylie Woolcock.

‘Long COVID has affected more than one in 25 Australians and left more than 1.5 million at risk of long-term chronic illness, preventing many with the condition from going about their day-to-day lives.’

‘But as examined in an Issues Brief published today by our Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research, the true burden of this condition on our healthcare system is not well understood and is likely underestimated, meaning that care and support resources cannot be allocated appropriately.’

The Issues Brief, [How patient experiences can guide the development of Long COVID health policy](#), co-authored by final year Griffith University PhD candidate Breanna Weigel as part of a 2023 Deeble Summer Scholarship, examines the role lived experiences can play in guiding Australian health policy in recognising and providing support to people living with Long COVID.

‘One of the many challenges people with Long COVID face is that there is no single, nationally accepted case definition for Long COVID in Australia, and public health messaging differs across each state and territory. This complicates an already challenging diagnostic process,’ says Ms Woolcock.

‘What’s more, despite formal recognition in other OECD countries, Australia does not recognise Long COVID as a disability. This compromises access to necessary care and support services, which are already limited, and contributes to the discrimination and stigma faced by people with Long COVID in healthcare and employment settings.’

To ensure that Australians with Long COVID are recognised and supported with adequate and appropriate person-centred healthcare, social, and disability services, a number of key priority areas must be addressed.

‘Improved surveillance and consistent public health guidance will be essential to accurately identifying the burden of Long COVID on Australia’s healthcare system and resourcing it to respond accordingly.’

‘The recognition of the disabling impacts of Long COVID in Australian health policy must also be pursued so that people with Long COVID can access necessary services and be protected from discrimination.’

‘Increasing engagement with Long COVID consumers will be vital to developing and delivering person-centred, value-based care for all people with Long COVID in Australia.’

The Deeble Summer Scholarship program is supported by HESTA.

The online version of this [media release](#) and the Perspectives Brief ‘[How patient experiences can guide the development of Long COVID health policy](#)’ can be found on the AHHA website. **The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the independent peak membership body and advocate for the Australian healthcare system and a national voice for universally accessible, high-quality healthcare in Australia.**

Media enquiries: Kylie Woolcock, Chief Executive, AHHA, 0410 625 830