

Our Health System

An AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS Election Platform

25 Steps to a Great Health System

Australia's health care system is riddled with inefficiencies, duplication, cost shifting and buck passing between the governments and, as the Tasmanian hospital 'rescue' shows, too often used for political game-playing. The private health system has been fostered and heavily subsidised, increasing costs overall and drawing resources and health professionals away from the public system. The system lacks integration and is focused on hospitals and treatment for preventable conditions at the expense of prevention and primary care. Indigenous people, those in rural areas and on low incomes are not getting their fair share of the health dollar. Radical reform is needed, urgently.

Health

1. Restructure health by setting up a Commonwealth/ State Health Commission, pool funding and distribute according to health priorities
2. Phase out private health insurance subsidies (around \$6 billion a year) and invest the money in primary care
3. Expand the role of nurses and allied health workers, with greater access to MBS and PBS
4. Establish a National Health Policy
5. Establish a National Preventative Health Taskforce
6. Allocate Medicare provider numbers on a per capita geographic basis

Medicines

7. Tighten rules on the marketing and promotion of medicines to doctors

Dental

8. Introduce a national public dental health program, free for concession card holders, which includes a full check-up and basic treatment every two years

Mental Health

9. Roll-out community-based primary mental health centres staffed by psychiatrists, psychologists, GPs, psychiatric nurses and social workers

Indigenous Health

10. Add \$460 million a year emphasising Indigenous control and participation
11. Address housing, education, transport and self-determination

Rural Health

12. Increase transport and accommodation allowances for sick people and their carers, when health services are not available locally

Child and Maternal Health

13. Implement a National Maternity Action Plan with publicly funded midwifery services throughout pregnancy and childbirth
14. Fund universal maternal and child health services, including a home visitor program for new babies
15. Establish a Royal Commission into the sexual assault of children and child abuse in general

Men's and Women's Health

16. Fund National Men's and Women's Health Policies
17. Train primary health care professionals in women's and men's health
18. Increase funding for violence prevention, crisis services, and refuge accommodation
19. Encourage the states to remove abortion from the criminal code, ensure pregnancy counselling is unbiased and its advertising transparent

Aged and Community Care

20. Boost Home and Community Care funding by 20% to support older people at home
21. Provide capital support for residential aged care providers for new and upgraded buildings

Complementary Health

22. Reform regulation to recognise the lower-risk nature of these products and to encourage innovation and investment

Substance Use and Misuse

23. Invest more in preventing drug use by young people
24. Tighten alcohol and tobacco advertising and product promotion restrictions and tax all alcohol according to alcohol content

End of life decision making

25. Support nationally consistent voluntary euthanasia laws with sophisticated safeguards

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“*The problem with health reform is that even when major redesign is necessary, many ‘reformers’ continue to think incrementally. Some believe that major redesign is impossible, that political timidity and acquiescence have become a way of life for many health ministers. They see the individual parts of the system working reasonably well, and fail to see that the system as a whole is inefficient and unfair.*”

John Menadue
Chair, Centre for Policy Development

Equal access to high quality and affordable health care is a basic principle of a democratic society. But whether people can get the health care they need in Australia is increasingly based on where they live, how much money they have, whether they are male or female and their race and culture.

This Government has supported private health insurance with billions of dollars of public money, undermining universal access and is pushing up prices for everyone. Medicare is the fairest and most efficient way of delivering health care but is being downgraded to a safety net for the less well off. And we are not well set up to meet the health challenges of the 21st century. There is too much emphasis on hospital care and too little on prevention and primary care. There is a chronic shortage of medical and health staff aggravated by turf wars and an outdated MBS system. Indigenous health is a disgrace and rural and remote Australians don't get their fair share of the health dollar.

The Australian Democrats are committed to a health system that is equitable, efficient and accessible to all Australians and one that will improve population health outcomes, now and in the future. The Democrats initiated Senate inquiries into Medicare and into mental health services.

Action Plans

The issues around our health system are complex.

For a more detailed analysis please see our following Action Plans:

Alcohol

Men's Health

Community Care

Complementary Health

Dental Health

Euthanasia

Indigenous Health

Medicare

Medicare Safety Nets

Mental Health

Pharmaceuticals

Residential Aged Care

Reproductive Health

Tobacco

Women's Health

These, and many more, are available online:

www.democrats.org.au



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