

INTRODUCTION



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The Final Report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission presents the why, the what, and the how for a long term reform agenda for Australia's health system.

This Report builds on *Beyond the Blame Game* (April 2008) and our Interim Report (December 2008) to complete a body of work for consideration by governments in their pursuit of health reform.

In April 2009, we released a supplementary paper, *Person-controlled Electronic Health Records*, and a background paper, *The Australian Health Care System: The Potential for Efficiency Gains*, was released in June 2009.

We have actively consulted with governments, government agencies, the health sector, health consumers and with the community through meetings, forums, and our website. Hundreds of submissions have been received in response to our Interim Report.

A Healthier Future For All Australians: Final Report completes a staged process of listening, learning, reviewing and advising that has been extensive, rewarding and, ultimately, a privilege.

Many of the most expert health thinkers in this country and internationally have generously given their time, constructive criticisms and ideas.

And we have been exposed to the very real health needs and concerns of the Australian population put powerfully to us through our community forums, written submissions, and other feedback mechanisms.

We now present our final reform recommendations to the governments of Australia, along with a roadmap for action in the short, medium and long terms.

Health is everybody's business. We all have a role to play in our own health and in the health of our communities. We hope that these recommendations will encourage and inform action by individuals, community and consumer groups, health funds, schools, businesses, universities, professional colleges and industry bodies, clinicians, researchers and health managers to make Australians the healthiest people in the world.

The Work of the NHHRC

Beyond the Blame Game

In our first report, *Beyond the Blame Game* (April 2008), we provided advice to inform the negotiations around the Australian Health Care Agreements.

We identified key health challenges and developed performance indicators and benchmarks that reflected our long-term view of the health system.

We developed a set of design and governance principles to underpin the health system of the future. These principles remain fundamental to our reform agenda and are listed in Appendix F.

Interim Report

In our Interim Report, we proposed reform directions across the broad and complex range of issues facing our health system now and into the future.

These reform directions were grouped under four themes:

- **Taking responsibility** – Individual and collective action to build good health and wellbeing – by people, families, communities, health professionals, employers, health funders and governments;
- **Connecting care** – Comprehensive care for people over their lifetime;
- **Facing inequities** – Recognise and tackle the causes and impacts of health inequities; and
- **Driving quality performance** – Leadership and systems to achieve best use of people, resources, and evolving knowledge.

Following the release of the Interim Report in February 2009, we conducted further consultation. We received more than 280 submissions, conducted an online e-survey and held a series of specific workshops and meetings.

We met with federal, state and territory Health Ministers and Departments.

The generous support and interest of many individuals and groups across the health industry and the community more broadly helped us greatly in this final phase of our work.

A Healthier Future For All Australians: Final Report

Our Final Report builds on the reform directions proposed in our Interim Report to produce a set of 123 recommendations for action.

This report presents the why, the what, and the how for a long term reform agenda for Australia's health system.

In **Chapter 1**, we present a compelling case for long-term reform with action starting now. We explain the problems of today's health system – the difficulties in access, the inequities and gaps in services, quality concerns, and the inefficiencies and waste.

We then turn to the very real challenges ahead of us which we need to prepare for, including the impact of an ageing population on health need and the health workforce; the increasing health burden from chronic diseases, frailty and disability; and the need to keep health care affordable, given consumer expectations, increasing health care costs, and new technology advances.

Finally, we go beyond the horizon to consider the possibilities and the unexpected in a changing world, and why it is important that our health system be able to adapt and continually improve.

In **Chapter 2** we present our vision and reform goals and paint a picture as to how our recommendations fit together to meet issues and challenges in the short, medium and long term.

Chapter 3 presents actions to deal with the major access and equity issues that affect health outcomes for people now.

Chapter 4 describes the transformational changes required to redesign our health system to meet emerging challenges.

Chapter 5 explains what we need to do to create an agile and self-improving health system, which can respond to the changing needs of people in a changing world.

In **Chapter 6**, we show how reforming the governance and structure of the health system will provide the leadership and stewardship our health system needs. We present reforms to achieve 'one national health system' now and ideas on how to further improve the responsiveness, sustainability and capacity for innovation by creating a self-improving health system in the long term.

In **Chapter 7**, we present a roadmap for reform and outline the investment required to implement our recommendations, the gains from this investment in terms of improved health services, and the long-term impact on health expenditure, efficiency and productivity.

