

# Commit to Healthcare

## The RACP's election priorities for quality, future-focused healthcare for all

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) represents physicians and paediatricians who are passionate about using their medical training and expertise to enable their patients to live longer and healthier lives.

In the lead up to the 2022 Federal Election, the RACP is calling on political leaders to 'Commit to Healthcare' – to commit to a suite of policy recommendations that will deliver a quality, future-focused healthcare system for all.

The [RACP's Pre-Election Statement](#) outlines this comprehensive set of policy recommendations based on the expertise of our members. This factsheet lists a number of key recommendations.

### Our recommendations are organised into four priority areas:



**System reform to strengthen the health system**



**Equity to give all Australians the opportunity for good health and wellbeing across their lifespan**



**Prevention to reduce preventable chronic disease and ill health**



**Climate resilience to equip our healthcare system so it is climate ready and climate friendly**



## SYSTEM REFORM TO STRENGTHEN THE HEALTH SYSTEM

### **Urgently address care delayed by COVID-19 and strengthen pandemic preparedness**

- ▶ Invest in all parts of the healthcare sector impacted by COVID-19, including elective surgery, cancer diagnosis, palliative care and mental health services.
- ▶ Establish a national health leadership centre of excellence to improve responsiveness to current and emerging health threats and to coordinate national prevention activities.

### **Increase access to specialist care, including through telehealth**

- ▶ Address specialist workforce issues, especially for regional, rural and remote areas.
- ▶ Reinstate MBS items for telehealth consultations by phone on a permanent basis.
- ▶ Introduce specialist health items to the MBS to facilitate secondary consultations between specialists, GPs and other health professionals with or without the patient present.
- ▶ Fund videoconferencing packages to provide equitable access to telehealth.
- ▶ Continue to fund and promote MBS Item 715.

### **Build up a future-focused health and aged care workforce that is culturally safe and provides work-life balance**

- ▶ Develop an appropriately funded national workforce development strategy led by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to boost the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health professionals and other health workers.
- ▶ Invest in health workforce development to equip everyone in the health system to implement the new approach set out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- ▶ Support the prioritisation, expansion and provision of sustained and long-term funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) for the delivery of primary healthcare services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ▶ Produce and fund the Government's Plan for Australia's Public Health Capacity and COVID-19 as agreed by National Cabinet in June 2020.
- ▶ Grow and support the rural and remote healthcare workforce.
- ▶ Urgently implement the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety's comprehensive aged care workforce-focused recommendations.
- ▶ Develop national strategies for flexible training/work hours/parental leave and support, especially for doctors in training.

### **Provide wrap-around care, including specialist care, based on the best evidence on innovation and integration**

- ▶ Facilitate scalable evidence-based integrated care for people with chronic conditions, inclusive of specialist care.
- ▶ Increase funding for medical research, including through the National Medical Health Research Council (NHMRC).



## EQUITY TO GIVE ALL AUSTRALIANS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACROSS THEIR LIFESPAN

### Support Indigenous self-determination and leadership to Close the Gap

- ▶ Implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart recommendations.
- ▶ Fund the implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031.

### Support older Australians' wellbeing and independence

- ▶ Implement the recommendations of the Final Report of the Royal Commission for Aged Care Quality and Safety.
- ▶ Increase the availability of Home Care Packages to eliminate delays which often lead to progressive impairment and loss of independence.

### Support the individual autonomy of people with disability

- ▶ Appropriately fund the NDIS and improve linkage between the health and disability sectors.
- ▶ Fund complex care delivered by medical specialists for young people living with disability to support continuity of care and access across settings, including in the community.

### Support children and young people to catch up from the setbacks of COVID-19

- ▶ Appoint a national Chief Paediatrician to provide clinical leadership on child and adolescent health.
- ▶ Establish a taskforce to lead the development of a national recovery plan for children and young people .
- ▶ Fund and implement the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- ▶ Increase funding for evidence-based school support for students with disability and/or learning difficulties.
- ▶ Implement universal access to quality early childhood education programs for all three-year-olds.
- ▶ Restrict marketing of unhealthy diets to children and young people through regulation.

### Support the health and wellbeing of the Australian workforce

- ▶ Provide funding to implement the recommendations of the National Dust Disease Taskforce.
- ▶ Improve prevention of workplace illness and injury, and increase return-to-work rates by establishing a workplace health unit.

### Support people with substance use disorders

- ▶ Provide easier access to evidence-based treatments through increased access and affordability of opioid pharmacotherapies and expansion of free take-home naloxone.

### Empower patient and carers through health literacy

- ▶ Make health information and systems more accessible to consumers and carers with varying levels of digital and health literacy.
- ▶ Ensure information is available for communities of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



## PREVENTION TO REDUCE PREVENTABLE CHRONIC DISEASE AND ILL HEALTH

Commit to fully fund the National Preventive Health Strategy, which requires five per cent of health expenditure for prevention over 10 years, excluding COVID-related expenditure.

Invest in the prevention and treatment of harms arising from the misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Reduce alcohol-related harm by replacing the current Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) and rebate system with a volumetric taxation scheme for all alcohol products.

Raise the baseline rate of social support to increase recipients' ability to have health diets and lifestyles.



## CLIMATE RESILIENCE TO EQUIP OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM SO IT IS CLIMATE READY AND CLIMATE FRIENDLY

Appoint a national Chief Health Sustainability Officer to provide leadership, coordination and capacity building.

Urgently implement and fund a national climate change and health strategy to build climate resilience and an environmentally sustainable healthcare sector, including a plan to achieve net zero emissions in healthcare by 2040.

Establish a national healthcare sustainable development unit. The unit would draw on local best practice and leading international models, such as Greener NHS (and formerly the Sustainable Development Unit) in the UK.

Allocate dedicated funding for climate change and health mitigation and adaptation initiatives including national research funding, grant funding for states and territories, and funding for the development and scaling up of innovative projects at the local level.

Transition to zero emission renewable energy across all economic sectors with support to affected communities.

Read the full list of RACP's policy recommendations in our [Pre-Election Statement](#).

For more information please contact, [policy@racp.edu.au](mailto:policy@racp.edu.au)



We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Custodians and Elders – past, present and emerging – of the lands and waters on which RACP members and staff live, learn and work. RACP acknowledges Māori as tangata whenua and Te Tiriti o Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.