

What Place for Evidence in Health Reform: A Role for the Australian Institute of Health Policy Studies

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An unmet need

“Australia is currently blessed with an array of internationally acclaimed medical research institutes. In light of this, the stark absence of an internationally recognised Australian institute for health policy is a damning national disgrace.”

*Martin Van Der Weyden,
Editor, Medical Journal of Australia,
December 2002*

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Outline

- Relationship between health challenges and health reforms
- Improving the evidence base for health reforms
- The vision for the Australian Institute of Health Policy Studies
- Proposed priority areas for work and ways of working

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Health reforms

- Sustained, purposeful change to improve the efficiency, equity, and effectiveness of the health sector

VS

- Continuous change to the structure and delivery of health services in the name of efficiency, equity, and effectiveness

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Health and reform – a relationship?

- Health reform debates typically focus on Commonwealth-state financing and public/private mix
- Health care challenges relate to range and intensity of interventions, expansion of diagnostic boundaries, and consumer demands
- Health challenges lie in health inequalities, chronic diseases and preparedness for emerging diseases

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Evidence base for health policy

- Impetus of and demands arising from the evidence-based medicine movement
- Some successes, eg PBAC and MSAC
- Some challenges – differing needs and orientations of researchers and decision-makers
- Renewed commitments and international developments in USA, UK, Canada

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Some gaps to be filled

- Independent body producing credible multidisciplinary research and underpinned by balanced consideration of government, industry, and community interests
- Commitment to health policy that can work across and outside the health sector, with an orientation towards how health is produced

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The vision

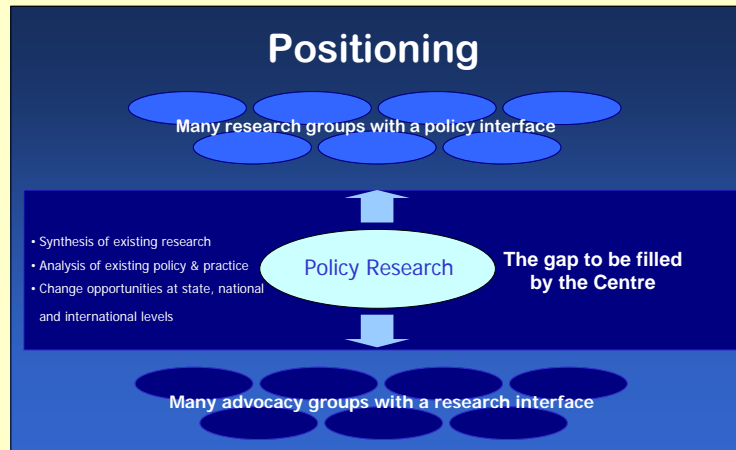
- A national health policy research institute that will:
 - Critically review existing policy and practice
 - Synthesise and review existing research
 - Identify and commission relevant research
 - Identify opportunities for improvement at state, national, and international levels

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Positioned to inform debate



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A national institute

- Australia's first national (and virtual) institute devoted to the study of health policy
- Focused on improving Australia's capacity for health policy research and development, with a system-level concern and a concern for the place of health
- Active links with other centres – including government, non-government, and industry partners

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5 research streams

1. Engaging consumers in health
2. Getting the most from prevention
3. Improving chronic disease outcomes
4. Priority setting in healthcare policy and planning
5. Workforce for the Australian healthcare system in the 21st century

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Deliverables to inform policy

- Bulletin-style updates and industry-specific analyses
- Bi-annual reports on 'best practice'
- Annual report on health system costs and performance
- Policy templates for improved prevention
- Hosting meetings that bring diverse perspectives together

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Initial Priorities

- Consumer engagement – do current models work? How to achieve consumer-centred health system?
- Prevention across the system – how to link population health programs with personal health care? What infrastructure and capacity is required at the local level?
- Health workforce – how to achieve greater flexibility while retaining current strengths? Are new interfaces required between consumers and health professionals, given new technologies?

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Another sense of health reform

“Evidence-based rejuvenation of cultures, structures, and approaches to the provision of health services in the community that maximises health gain, inclusion, wellbeing, quality of care, and consumer rights and participation, and minimises bureaucracy, waste, and needless complexity”

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