



**HEALTH ISSUES CENTRE—SUBMISSION TO AUSTRALIA 2020 SUMMIT
April 2008**

Submission on topic of: **A long-term national health strategy—including the challenges of preventative health, workforce planning and the ageing population**

Consumers need an equitable, accessible and more strongly preventative health system, based on one common national framework (not nine!), centred around consumers' needs. We have a very good, committed health workforce but it is also true that the system has historically been designed more to suit providers than consumers—no one today would design our system in its highly fragmented multi-funded manner!

Health Issues Centre is an active member of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance—an alliance of major provider, professional and consumer organisations—and supports their call for significant reform of the health system to ensure Australia has a universal health system where people receive high quality health care (including prevention, promotion, treatment and care) according to need. It supports their 12 point submission to the Summit, especially the following.

Action is required to:

1. Address the social determinants of health and reduce the health gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, as most clearly illustrated in the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
2. Clarify the priorities for investment in health and the health system through active engagement of the community.
3. Increase investment in prevention, health promotion, health services research and the public dissemination of findings.
4. Ensure the views of consumers are taken into account in the development of health policy and services.
5. Build the capacity of consumers and communities to be involved in their own health care and in the development, planning and implementation of health services.

In response to the specific questions posed:

Prevention needs to comprise of multiple strategies (this has been the key to success in the fight against AIDS, smoking and the road accident toll) and to involve communities and others as partners in action, not as 'targets'.

Consumers need to be partners in care, but they also need to be health literate to enable this to happen, and there needs to be significant effort to lift this. Research shows that only about half of Australians are health literate enough to fully understand information received by health services and provided on medications. Increased literacy will lead to better involvement in decision making, more involvement in preventive activities and better outcomes for lower costs.

Staff need to be skilled in facilitating this, good quality information and decision aids to be available, and more structures established to foster and support self-management.

The 'Respecting Patient Choices' project work on advance care planning has demonstrated the value of a structured approach to facilitate consumers choosing the care that suits them. This approach could be extended throughout the health system, e.g. initially perhaps to consumers with chronic disease.

Lastly, travel issues need to be addressed for rural consumers using city hospitals—this travel adds a substantial burden for them and their carers—and the Senate recommendations on the patient travel support schemes implemented.