Impact Report: **February 2024**

***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this bulletin contains images and details of people who have passed***

In February, we joined with so many others in paying our respects to Yankunytjatjara woman Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG, whose extraordinary legacy is acknowledged far and wide.

This month, we also put a sustained focus on health and aged care reform, and thank those who contributed to our survey on the new Australian Centre for Disease Control.

We also thank everyone who participated in the #CroakeyLIVE discussion planning our collaborative #Medicare40Years journalism project.

Government responses to COVID in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand were put under the spotlight, and we encouraged readers to join us in using #TasVotesHealth2024, to put a focus on health ahead of the 23 March state election.

As the humanitarian nightmare escalated in Gaza, we reported on calls for peace-making from United Nations chief António Guterres.

And we launched the latest edition of The Hiking Wrap – where Dr Lesley Russell shares her love of walking, writing and travel. Make sure to download your FREE copy.

During February, Croakey Health Media made two policy submissions on media-related policies. You can see all our policy submissions here.

We encourage the health sector to engage proactively with media policy debates. The current state of the media landscape in Australia is undermining our health in many ways.

The weekly Croakey News bulletin is now sent to most federal, state and territory politicians across Australia. Each week during February, we were pleased to see that between 175 and 289 MPs opened Croakey News.

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**Social Media Impressions**

We record our social media analytics using Buffer. The figures below are for total impressions across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. See our latest readership figures here.

**This month:** 224,225 impressions | **This year:** 361,602 impressions
An incredible legacy

Week ending 8 February: Since the news broke last Sunday of the passing of Yankunytjatjara woman Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG, aged 91, the tributes have flowed thick and fast.

We have compiled a selection of those from health and human rights leaders. At Croakey, we join with many others in acknowledging the incredible legacy of Dr O’Donoghue and send our condolences to her family, friends and colleagues.

This week, we put a determined focus on pressing health reform issues, with Alison Barrett reporting from a recent #CroakeyLIVE discussion, which was held to inform our #Medicare40Years project.

Don’t miss The Zap by Charles Maskell-Knight, who also continues his investigation of plans for new federal aged care legislation.

The ICYMI column puts the spotlight on cancer inequities, the social determinants of mental health, imperatives for transforming global food systems, and health workforce strategies in an era of global boiling. Also, Professor Stephen Duckett breaks out the sarcasm font in responding to the Fels inquiry on price gouging.

On climate and health matters, Associate Professor Angie Bone shares reflections from the recent COP28 meeting, and the Lowitja Institute calls for Federal Government support for a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition on Climate and Health.

We examine drug law reform in NSW – and don’t miss Marie McInerney’s recent report, with cohealth, on Victoria’s new public intoxication response.

Meanwhile, as the humanitarian nightmare escalates in Gaza, and the world enters “an age of chaos”, we must work harder for peace, says United Nations chief António Guterres.

We cover his recent speech about the importance of reforms to support peace-making in a world dominated by “so much anger and hate and noise”.

https://www.croakey.org/impact-and-readership/
Thank you to everyone who participated in our #CroakeyLIVE planning session on 5 February for the #Medicare40years project.

Also follow this X/Twitter list of #Medicare40Years contributors.

“All Australians, now, and in 40 years’ time, should be able to access the best available, highest quality healthcare appropriate to their needs, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances.”

Adjunct Professor Alison Verhoeven

Source
We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the country where we live, work and travel upon, and to Elders, past, present and future.
Other activities

Croakey columnist Adjunct Associate Professor Lesley Russell at a Menzies Centre for Health Policy and Economics conference.
Don’t look away

Week ending 15 February: The ABC documentary series, Nemesis, which presents insider perspectives on the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison years, has been described as “blood sport feigning as government”.

If you’ve been watching, no doubt particular scenes or comments stick with you. At Croakey, we were struck by the image of former senior bureaucrat Jane Halton swearing at her television in response to the infamous “it’s not a race” comment about the slow COVID vaccine rollout.

So many wasted years. Climate action, health reform, self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, aged care, housing policy...the list goes on.

Several articles in our bulletin this week highlight the need for governments to do better at centring communities and equity in their work, rather than politics, whether it be Closing the Gap, youth mental health, or stepping up responses to COVID-19.

Alison Barrett raises some questions about where the new Australian Centre for Disease Control is heading. Don’t miss The Zap, and some interesting reflections on the wider costs of healthcare feature in The Health Wrap, the first edition for 2024.

As Victorian communities grapple with the aftermath of devastation and disruption, the ICYMI column brings the latest news on climate and health, a selection of Valentines for health, and previews a new COVID-19 drama from the UK, Breathtaking.

Dr Tess Ryan shares a beautiful tribute to her mother Ruth Ryan, and we also bring reflections on hope from the upcoming generation of health workers.

As we were finalising this bulletin, news broke of a joint statement by the Prime Ministers of Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Canada, warning Israel against its planned ground offensive into Rafah in southern Gaza, and calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and release of hostages. We bring more reports from health and medical organisations and agencies working in Gaza.

Meanwhile, please join us in using #TasVotesHealth2024, to put a focus on health ahead of the 23 March state election.
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"The gap is not a natural phenomenon. It is a direct result of the ways in which governments have used their power over many decades. In particular, it stems from a disregard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledges and solutions."

Productivity Commission Commissioners Romlie Mokak and Natalie Siegel-Brown

Charles Maskell-Knight @CharlesAndrewMK
In which I read the Productivity Commission ROGS chapter on health services so you don't have to... via @CroakeyNews

Lauren Ball @LaurenBall1 · Feb 26
Our health system is under stress + struggling to deal with demand by ext. waiting times. "The Govs recent measures will help address pharmaceutical costs & GP co-payments, but won't address the 8 of community psychiatry/other specialists" loom.ly/lzBGCI8 @croakeynews

Tess Ryan @TessRyan1 · Feb 12
I wrote this on the loss of my sweet, feisty mum. Like all Black mums, she could be forceful but none more forceful than when she was supporting us.

Public Health Advocacy Institute @PHAJWA
Important questions being asked about Australia's interim CDC which has been active since 1 Jan. After 6 weeks, there's little clarity about governance, communication & funding croakey.org/its-early-days... @CroakeyNews @Melinda_Edmunds @PHAA_ @IUPHE_SWP @AHPA_AU @MelissaSweetDr

Health & Oz election 2022
@LeonieMShort1
Thank you for including dental care as part of health reform in Australia...

Croakey News @CroakeyNews · 2h
The health system is under stress, and here are some of the ways that is affecting patient care croakey.org/the-health-sys... #publichealth
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**Quotable**

“...let this be a reminder that it is not just our role to cure and fix, but to listen, care and show an open kindness to our patients that can sometimes be just as healing as a medical intervention itself.”

Medical student Liv Dumville

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**Prevention Centre**

Follow @WePublicHealth for all the highlights of #FoodGovernance2024, A great start from @LacyNichols.

#FoodGovernance2024 @WePublicHealth - Feb 13

This week @LacyNichols is covering #FoodGovernance2024 - exploring how law, policy and regulation address food system challenges:

sydney.edu.au/law/our-research/

Warm thanks Jess at @NDFE.Tasmania for previous coverage of publichealth implications of salmon farming.

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**Croakey popular posts**

- **It’s early days for the Australian Centre for Disease Control, but already there are many questions about where it’s headed**

- **The Zap: don’t miss the latest on health and aged care, including long COVID, mental health – and a common policy failure**

- **On the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control, some questions answered**

- **As Australia and other countries put pressure on Israel, health and medical organisations describe horrific conditions in Gaza**

- **The Government is well behind on Closing the Gap. This is why we needed a Voice to Parliament**

- **At a critical moment for press freedom globally, urgent calls for a political solution to free Julian Assange**
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https://www.croakey.org/impact-and-readership/
On health, peace and justice

Week ending 22 February: In London supporting Julian Assange this week, Andrew Wilkie MP told a crowd of Assange supporters that it was “madness” the person who provided evidence of United States war crimes was before the courts, rather than those who committed the war crimes.

“Julian’s extradition would strike at the very heart of free speech and democracy. Enough is enough. The US must drop the extradition of Julian Assange,” he said.

As we await the judges’ decision, Marie McInerney provides a sobering backgrounder on the issues at stake, at a time of growing concerns about attacks and restraints on journalism in many countries.

This week’s bulletin also highlights the importance of justice and peace as determinants of health, as we near the two-year anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Dr Sophie Scamps MP thanks those health professionals and others speaking up for the people of Gaza.

As we write this, large areas of Australia are under heat and bushfire warnings. The ICYMI column covers climate justice and a new policy statement on children’s health and climate change, as well as concerns about healthcare access in prisons.

Several stories take a deep dive into health reform and policy: from long COVID, to priorities for the next National Health Reform Agreement, variations in healthcare access, and The Zap.

Don’t miss the story about a community group campaigning against the health and environmental impacts of feedlot salmon farming in lutruwita/Tasmania.
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Burnet Institute
@Burnet instiute

Burnet commends the Aus Gov’s prioritisation of #LongCOVID, but underscores the need for further action. A/Prof @MajumdarJuman said we urgently need to strengthen measures to prevent COVID infections, including initiatives towards clean indoor air.

More:

From croakey.org

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Charles Maskell-Knight
@Charles Andrew MK

There are differences in how the health system works for people in different areas/different levels of disadvantage/First Nations status – and some are surprising. via @CroakeyNews

From croakey.org

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Shaun Gath
@ShaunCGath

Excellent piece from @Peter Breaden setting out the challenges facing funding of health care over the next decade or more. Undoubtedly more targeted/system projects funding is required but ... it’s gonna cost. The perennial challenge: who pays? #auspol croakey.org/what-will-it-t...

From croakey.org

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Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSNIAMI) Elder Aunty Dulcie Flower, shares her tribute for Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG.

Revisit the memories of the lifelong work, advocacy and comradeship for Elders held.

Read now in Croakey.

#catsnami reflections Croakey - Informed, engaged communities for health. The Lowitja Institute - strength durability racing Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander #trailblazers Australia #sbsnews #sbsnewsaustralia www.CATSNIAMI.org.au #Croakey #leader ABC News SBS Australia

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Lowitja Institute
@LowitjaInstitute

Ahead of state funeral for Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue AC CBE DSG, some personal reflections – croakey.org/ahead-of-state...

#HonouringLowitja #TheFutureisinYourHands #LowitjasLegacy

From croakey.org

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**Quotable**

“It is appalling and an affront to Australia’s human rights status that prisoners in this country aren’t allowed to receive the same quality of healthcare as the wider community.”

Australian Medical Association president Professor Steve Robson

Source
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Political determinants

Week ending 29 February: Ahead of this Saturday’s Dunkley by-election, our bulletin this week highlights many ways that the political determinants of health play out, both positive and negative.

We also put a strong focus on food security, food systems and food governance issues, and intersections with the cultural, commercial and social determinants of health.

Amid warning upon warning of famine conditions in Gaza, academics are urging their universities to advocate for the urgent reinstatement of funding to UNRWA, amongst other measures.

In reflecting back on the COP28 meeting, Amba-Rose Atkinson writes that Australia’s path to a clean energy future must preface Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and rights.

In our lead story, Charles Maskell-Knight unpacks new data showing a “staggering” increase in vaping rates among young people, and says ongoing health efforts will be needed until “vaping rates are declining as fast as they have risen”.

Government responses to COVID, in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, come in for close examination.

This week we launch the latest edition of The Hiking Wrap – where Dr Lesley Russell shares her love of walking, writing and travel. She also found time to file The Health Wrap, with an analysis of #TasVotesHealth2024 and more.

Don’t miss The Zap and ICYMI columns; the latter laments policy destruction in Aotearoa/New Zealand and links to new recommendations for democratic control of artificial intelligence, as well as an ode to the benefits of swimming.
NAATSIHWP included this story on rural health in a bulletin to members and stakeholders.

Inequality widening in key social determinants of health in rural Australia

Highlighting the importance of place-based approaches to analyse and address health inequalities in rural Australia, new research has found that key social determinants of health vary in distribution between and within remoteness categories. While an analysis by Dr Joanne Flavel, Dr Sophie GE Kedzior, Dr Vivian Isaac, Darryl Cameron, and Professor Fran Baum found that premature and avoidable mortality has decreased in all socioeconomic quintiles outside of metropolitan Australia, inequality has increased for premature and avoidable mortality.
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Policy submissions

During February, Croakey Health Media made two policy submissions:

- Comments on News Media Assistance Program consultation paper (27 February, 2024) – Download CHM submission

- Submission to Productivity Commission Review of Philanthropy Future Foundations for Giving draft report (9 February, 2024) – Download CHM submission