

Australia's once-in-a-lifetime chance to build a better future

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Australia has a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to create a healthy, sustainable, equitable and prosperous future by taking bold action to build back better, fairer and greener after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Writing in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, Dr. Sandro Demaio, CEO of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), wrote that "change is in the air."

"Since the pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization in March 2020, we have witnessed significant social policy reforms in Australia with the rapid introduction of evidence-based (and at times, long-debated) policy change, including free childcare, accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, wage subsidies, widespread uptake of flexible and remote working arrangements, and the rollout of telehealth," he wrote.

"Public support has increased in some critical areas, including support for action to protect and promote health, the use of scientific evidence to inform decision making, and the leadership role of governments."

Dr. Demaio wrote that COVID-19 had exposed [health inequities](#), and therefore heightened "dissatisfaction about the lack of progress" to redress those inequities.

"We know that a healthy, sustainable, equitable and prosperous Australia is possible, because we know what causes [good health](#) and wellbeing, and the foundations for action are already in place," he wrote.

VicHealth has produced a Supplement to the MJA entitled Australia in 2030: what is our path to health for all, which outlines how "health and wellbeing for current and future generations can be achieved with evidence-based action on the multiple and complex determinants of health."

The Supplement contents include:

1. How Australia improved health equity through action on the social determinants of health;
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to culture: building stronger individual and collective wellbeing;
3. Physical determinants of health: healthy, liveable and [sustainable](#)

[communities](#);

4. Health promotion in the Anthropocene: the ecological determinants of health;
5. Disrupting the commercial determinants of health;
6. Digital determinants of health: the digital transformation; and,
7. Governance for health and equity: a vision for our future.

"There is nothing holding us back and no excuses for complacency, inaction or practice not informed by evidence or based on principles of equity and sustainability," wrote Dr. Demaio.

"In order to achieve these profound shifts, the health sector and public health workforce must also evolve. Investment in the workforce is essential, and existing [health promotion](#) frameworks need revising to support the shifts and guide subsequent action to build back better, fairer and greener.

"It is time for bold action and systemic change. We must work together to seize this opportunity to create a post-pandemic pathway to health for all by 2030."

More information: Sandro Demaio. Health for all by 2030 is within our grasp: we must act now, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2021). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.51018](#)

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