

‘As the horror year that was 2020 comes to a close, the latest edition of the *Australian Health Review*, highlights reform opportunities across the mental health and aged care sectors’, says the Editor-in-Chief of *Australian Health Review*, Professor Sonj Hall.

Australian Health Review is the academic journal of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA).

In a policy reflection, Dr Sebastian Rosenberg from the Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian National University, cautions that we must combat ‘Commission fatigue’ and ensure focused, strategic reform in both the aged care and mental health sectors.

He says the findings of the Royal Commission and the recent Productivity Commission report into mental health are shocking, but that we should not be shocked because ongoing failures over many years to institute strategic reform have led us to the circumstances we now face.

Anna Dixon of the UK Centre for Ageing Better highlights the significant proportion of COVID-related deaths, which have occurred in residential aged care facilities across the world.

‘Echoing findings from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, Anna Dixon notes that this raises vital questions for governments about how we want to care for the growing number of older people now and in the future’, says Professor Hall.

‘Research conducted by Professor Diane Gibson, University of Canberra, points to changing trends in residential aged care, such as higher growth rates in the number of men and of people aged 65–74 years and 90 years and over, a decline in the number of women aged 75–89 years, and rising dependency levels, that may offer useful insights for future planning.’

Cultural change and service transformation is the focus of researchers from the Northern Adelaide Local Health Network. A pilot project aimed at improving workplace culture, following the Oakden Report, demonstrated a positive impact on experiences and outcomes for both patients and staff.

‘The plight of younger people in residential aged care is discussed in an article by researchers from the Summer Foundation’, says Professor Hall.

Despite many programs over the past decade aimed at reducing the number of younger people admitted to residential aged care, there are still around 6000 younger people living in aged care and there has been little sustained improvement in reducing admissions rates or in improving the quality of life experienced by this group of people with complex care needs.

‘Several articles in this edition of the *Australian Health Review* point a way forward to improving mental health care in Australia, including via online mental health services’, says Professor Hall.

‘This includes a review of the implementation of an online stepped care service for anxiety and depression in general practice, StepCare, and research out of the University of Adelaide, which reveals that while online mental health care is an important source of help-seeking for young adults, more work needs to be done to promote and better integrate this treatment option into primary and secondary care.’

Other articles explore the role of codesign in developing mental health models of care, partnership with mental health carers, and workforce strategies including peer workers with lived experience and the potential for greater engagement of mental health nurses.

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The December 2020 edition can be accessed [here](#). More information on AHHA is available at ahha.asn.au.

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and community and primary healthcare services.

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