

A (rural) health system for the 21st century

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'Health reform' has been on the agenda for a number of years now, with Medicare Locals, Local Hospital or Health Networks and a new approach to activity-based funding for public hospitals being among the main results to date.

In her presentation, Jane will consider the extent to which Australia now has the health system it needs for the challenges of the 21st century, and what evidence we have to get us to a better place.

Jane will call on research evidence, including from the UTS Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation of which she is Director and from the work of the Centre for Research Excellence (CRE) in the economics and finance of primary health care in Australia. The CRE's focus is on how primary health care policies affect the use and costs of health care, the quality of care, patients' health outcomes and whether patients' experiences are improved.

Access to a health system that works well, including for people who live in rural and remote areas, and which is economically efficient, is something in which all Australians have a stake. Health care can be seen as a human right—one that is available unevenly to populations with different characteristics. In addition, around 10 per cent of the nation's GDP is spent on health, with Australians also paying around \$800 per person in direct out-of-pocket health costs.

The provision of primary care in Australia needs well-considered reform, in order to achieve a stronger multidisciplinary and population-based approach and greater flexibility, including in relation to health workforce roles and mixed payment approaches.