



Surviving Healthcare Change

The struggle between organisations to secure, defend and enhance their role in the health care system in an environment of increasing change means they will have to adapt or risk having their role shrink. Only active and clever participants will survive the transition from the traditional health system to a rapidly evolving new system. An ageing population, a world wide skills shortage, increasing treatment options and technology, growing health care costs and government's inability to adequately fund all health care are all driving unstoppable change. Consumers are demanding solutions and governments will be forced to act to the detriment of many who feel their current role and position in the healthcare system is secure.

Health Backgrounder

Competing interests

- ◆ Doctors (Specialists, GPs, trainees)
- ◆ Nurses
- ◆ Pharmacists
- ◆ Technicians
- ◆ Allied health professionals
- ◆ Complementary health care
- ◆ Federal, State & Territory Governments
- ◆ Manufacturers & suppliers
- ◆ Academic and research institutions
- ◆ Religious & charitable (NFP) institutions
- ◆ Publicly listed companies
- ◆ Hospitals (public and private)
- ◆ Residential care providers
- ◆ Private health insurers
- ◆ Medical indemnity insurers
- ◆ Disease-related special interest groups
- ◆ Consumers

The current environment

- ◆ Sanctity of Medicare
- ◆ Existing party platforms and ideology
- ◆ "Quick fixes" versus long term solutions
- ◆ State/Federal funding & cost shifting
- ◆ Service provider self interest
- ◆ Patient driven demand for services
- ◆ Two-tier funding and service provision
- ◆ Intra-professional turf wars
- ◆ Erosion of traditional practice bases
- ◆ Corporate medicine
- ◆ Medico-legal changes

The forces for change

- ◆ Ageing population
- ◆ Competition with other fiscal and social priorities eg Defence and Infrastructure
- ◆ Workforce shortages
- ◆ International market for medical professional services
- ◆ Commoditisation of medicine
- ◆ Growth in number and cost of medications
- ◆ Evidence-based decision-making
- ◆ Quality use of scarce resources
- ◆ Managing appropriate demand
- ◆ Government need for certainty
- ◆ Achieving a public/private balance
- ◆ Hospital waiting lists
- ◆ Private health insurance contributions and benefits
- ◆ Medical indemnity cover and premiums
- ◆ Managing and funding technology

Where to influence change

- ◆ Political party platforms
- ◆ Federal Budget decisions
- ◆ Election promises
- ◆ Funding agreements
- ◆ Parliamentary Inquiries
- ◆ Productivity Commission Inquiries
- ◆ Media
- ◆ Stakeholder alliances

Survival Skills

The Government and its advisers are becoming more skilled in dealing with the competing and complex demands for health sector funding. Not only do they keep a sophisticated watch on overseas developments, the issues surrounding health funding have become so central to Government thinking that it is now the key central agencies of PM&C, Treasury and Finance which determine the direction of policy proposed by the Health bureaucrats.

For interest groups to work effectively, it is essential that they have access to special expertise to develop and present their case professionally. Necessary skills include:

- ◆ Data collection, interpretation & analysis
- ◆ Medical knowledge
- ◆ Economic analysis
- ◆ Intimate knowledge of how the system works and where optimum leverage can be achieved
- ◆ Extensive network of contacts, politically, in the

bureaucracy and with other health lobby groups

- ◆ Research skills
- ◆ Policy development skills
- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Strategy planning
- ◆ Submission writing
- ◆ Development of succinct positions
- ◆ Advocacy skills

Without these skills, survival will be difficult. Already 2005 is awash with critical issues which will affect policy outcomes during the life of the current Government.

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