



THE MITCHELL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH POLICY

A leading think tank at Victoria University



Introducing the Mitchell Institute

The Mitchell Institute for Education and Health Policy at Victoria University is one of Australia's trusted thought leaders in education and health policy. Our focus is on improving our education and health systems so more Australians can engage with and benefit from these services, supporting a healthier, fairer society. We are informed, independent and influential, with a proven ability to identify current and emerging problems in education and health and use evidence to develop achievable solutions.

Established in 2013, the Mitchell Institute is part of Victoria University, whose mission is to create exceptional value for any student from any background and uplift the communities in which it operates. Our close links with leading academics and institutes from across Victoria University means we are able to draw on cutting-edge research to inform and improve Australia's health and education systems.

Our people and capabilities are detailed at www.mitchellinstitute.org.au

What we do

We work to inform and influence public policy and practice to improve the health and education opportunities of all Australians, in particular those in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. In order to achieve this:

- **We analyse evidence and data** to understand how our education and health systems are performing; who they are supporting well and who they are failing; how policy settings are influencing health and education outcomes; and the extent to which international evidence and experience can contribute to improving the health and education of Australians.
- **We support and stimulate public discussion and debate** to increase policymakers' and public understanding of the key health and education challenges we face; the benefits to both the economy and society of fairer and more responsive health and education systems; and how these systems can be improved through evidence-based policy and practice.
- **We assist and advise policymakers** to make better use of evidence in designing and implementing reform. We translate complex health and education system data into clear policy ideas; we engage directly with decision-makers, service providers and service users to provide a deep and well-rounded perspective on challenges that Australia faces; and we research international health and education systems to

understand the impact of different policies and practices, and possible relevance to the Australian context.

Strong partnerships are critical to our work. We work closely with research bodies at Victoria University, including the Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) and the Institute for Health and Sport (IHES). The Mitchell Institute also leads the Australian Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC), an initiative that brings together over 50 leading health organisations and 70 chronic disease experts to drive progress in tackling chronic disease. Our research connections are enhanced by our partnerships with local communities, and collaboration with leading health and education experts and providers.

Our track record

The Mitchell Institute looks at our education and health systems in their entirety to see what works, what doesn't, and where to make the most difference. With our unique capacity for engaging with complexity, Mitchell is well placed to advise where investment will have the greatest impact. We have proven ability to translate in-depth insights from research and practice into practical policy ideas, while looking beyond simplistic solutions. Through our collaboration with experts, governments and influencers, and practitioners, the Mitchell Institute connects with the right people to create meaningful change.

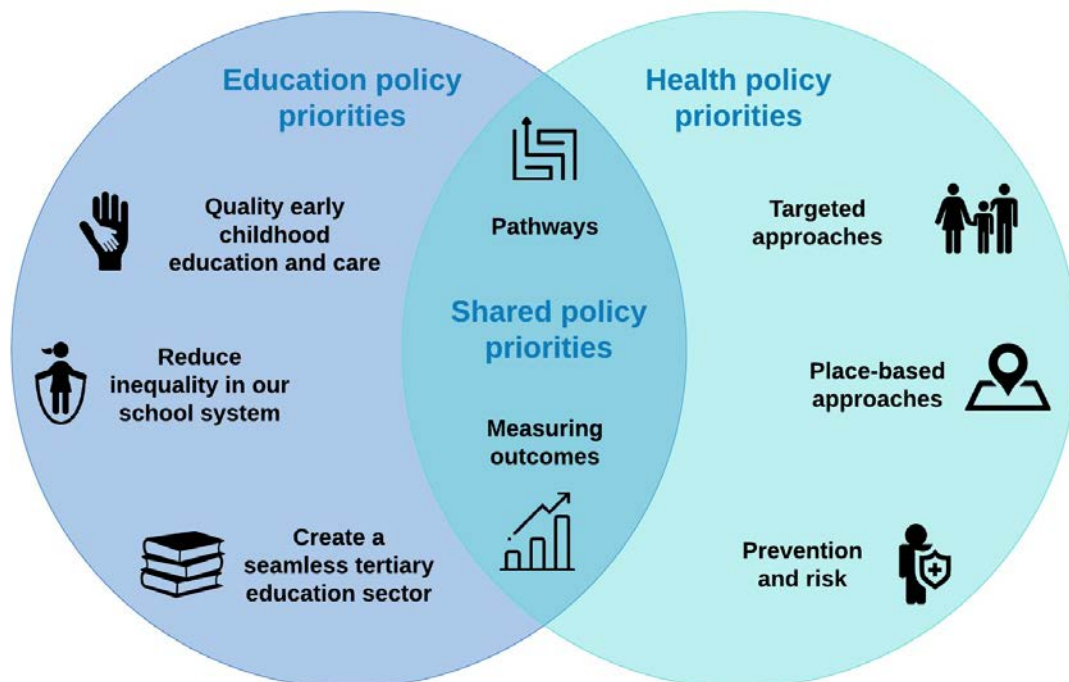
The Mitchell Institute's key strength lies in its capacity to work with diverse forms of evidence to develop innovative insights and solutions. We produce a range of research and policy products, including major research reports, policy briefings and report cards. We convene and contribute to seminars and events on issues related to our policy priorities, and we are available to undertake bespoke policy and research projects. Our work has been highly influential in informing and catalysing policy debate across a range of areas, including:

- ***Educational Opportunity for All*** – This series of reports offers comprehensive insights into Australia's education and training system. Our landmark 2015 report analysed the extent to which all young Australians are benefiting from opportunities offered through our education system, stimulating substantial public and policy awareness.
- ***Australian Health Trackers*** – A series of trackers measuring national progress on a range of health issues, including chronic disease, oral health, and mental health in Australian children and adults. Trackers are developed by the Australian Health Policy Collaboration, a program led by the Mitchell Institute, and are used by a range of policy-makers to inform decision-making at local, state and national level.

- **Preschool: Two Years are Better than One** – The Mitchell Institute has been at the forefront of early childhood education and care research since its establishment in 2013. Evidence on the impact of two years of high-quality preschool, and the importance of quality in the early years, has been highly influential in informing the agendas and policies of numerous governments and political parties at both state and national levels.
- **Getting Australia’s Health on Track** – The Australian Health Policy Collaboration has produced targets for 2025 for the prevention and reduction of chronic diseases in Australia, in line with the global agenda set by the World Health Organization. This report sets out 10 priority policies to drive progress against the 2025 targets. Developed and endorsed by over 70 of Australia’s leading chronic disease scientists, researchers and clinicians, the actions complement existing national and state territory policies.

Policy priorities

The Mitchell Institute’s dual focus on health and education recognises the strong and complex links between these areas, and the important roles of our health and education systems in tackling inequality. Education plays a critical role in influencing health outcomes for individuals and communities, and health and wellbeing are critical to success in education. Our health and education programs share a number of policy priorities, and also work on specific issues within each program.



Shared priorities

Monitoring outcomes: The Mitchell Institute has substantial expertise in monitoring the performance of our health and education systems, with a specific focus on reducing inequality. Much of this work seeks to understand where inequality exists within these systems, and what factors are driving inequalities in health and education. In education, our focus is on development of well-rounded learners at all levels of the system, beyond a narrow focus on academic performance. In health, our focus is on improving the accountability of our health system by monitoring the status of Australia's population across a range of health challenges.

Pathways: People enter, experience and navigate our health and education systems in very different ways. These trajectories, and the options and decisions that determine trajectories, are commonly referred to as pathways. The way our health and education systems are structured and delivered has a significant influence on the types of pathways available; the extent to which people can move between different pathways; and whether these pathways meet the needs of individuals and communities. The Mitchell Institute explores how well our systems provide a diverse range of pathways in health and education, to determine what changes are needed to improve services for all Australians, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Education priorities

Quality early childhood education and care (ECEC): High-quality ECEC can have a significant impact on all aspects of children's development, and their engagement with education and work later in life. As government investment in ECEC has increased, gaps are emerging in access to early childhood services for disadvantaged children and families, and in the quality of services that they receive. The Mitchell Institute aims to understand how our system can be structured and supported to deliver access to quality education and care from birth throughout early childhood, and to reduce the impact of disadvantage early on in life.

Reduce inequality in our school system: Inequality between advantaged and disadvantaged students is one of the greatest enduring challenges in Australian school education. Allocating funding according to the needs of students and schools is a critical part of addressing inequality, but needs-based funding must be part of a more comprehensive effort that encompasses diverse learning needs. The Mitchell Institute looks at how our school system is both supporting and failing young learners; the extent to which our system is perpetuating disadvantage; and what can be done to address these persistent challenges.

Create a seamless tertiary education sector: The Australian tertiary education sector continues to struggle with the demands of mass higher education, and the ongoing need for responsive, accessible vocational education and training (VET). Decades of reform have not yet delivered a sustainable tertiary education sector that presents a seamless array of options to meet student and employer needs. Our work looks at participation in tertiary education to understand barriers to access, and how well Australia is equipping itself for current and future skills needs. We also have a strong focus on how the system is structured and funded to best meet the needs of all users.

Health priorities

Targeted approaches: Compared with those from higher socio-economic groups, Australians from lower socio-economic groups have higher levels of illness and disability, lower levels of wellbeing and shorter life expectancies. These disparities cause significant pain and harm to people and communities experiencing poor health outcomes, and represent a substantial economic burden to Australia. Our work focuses on how socio-economic status and levels of disadvantage influence health risks and outcomes, and how health, education and other public policies can be tailored to reduce risks for specific groups of Australians, and improve their health and wellbeing.

Place-based approaches: Where you live affects your health. Access to and quality of health and social services varies across urban, regional, rural and remote environments in Australia. People's health and wellbeing is also influenced by the social and physical characteristics of their communities. The Mitchell Institute's flagship place-based program, Growing Brimbank, works in partnership with the Brimbank City Council and Victoria University to explore and address these challenges at a local level, taking a holistic approach that addresses risk factors and challenges in health, wellbeing and education.

Prevention and risk: Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular health, dementia and diabetes have major long-term impacts on individuals, their families and their communities. The growing burden of chronic disease in Australia threatens to overwhelm the health budget, the capacity of health services and the health workforce. More than one-third of that burden is preventable or can be reduced through effective, evidence-based changes to policy. Our work is guided by preventive health principles developed by the Australian Health Policy Collaboration, and endorsed by more than 50 of Australia's leading health organisations.



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