



NEWS RELEASE

Australia's universal health-care system outperforms Canada on key measures including wait times, costs less and includes large role for private hospitals

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VANCOUVER—Australia spends slightly less on its universal health care as a share of its economy, but routinely outperforms Canada on key health indicators. It also delivers universal health-care differently by including a large role for private hospitals, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Australia and Canada are very similar in many respects. Both are high-income western countries with universal health care, but unlike in Canada, private hospitals play a fundamental role in Australia’s universal health-care framework,” said Mackenzie Moir, policy analyst at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *The Role of Private Hospitals in Australia’s Universal Health Care System*.

The study finds that in 2021/22, the most recent year of comparable data, the role of private hospitals in Australia’s universal health-care system ranged from 41.0 per cent of all hospital care, to 70.3 per cent of all non-emergency hospital care involving surgery.

In fact, in 2016 (the latest year of comparable data), 48.5 per cent of Australia’s hospitals were private hospitals.

Overall, patients in Australia face shorter wait times than in Canada. In 2020, 54 percent of Australians waited less than 4 weeks for a specialist compared to only 38 percent in Canada. And while 72 percent waited less than 4 months for non-emergency surgery in Australia, only 62 percent received treatment within that timeframe in Canada. In fact, in 2020, Australia beat Canada on 33 (of 36) measures of health performance, including availability of physicians, nurses, hospital beds, CT scanners, and MRI machines, in addition to shorter wait times.

“It’s important for Canadians to understand that other countries deliver universal health care differently, and often with better results,” said Bacchus Barua, director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of the study.

“Australia shows us that working with the private sector to help deliver universal health care is possible, and indeed, a well-documented feature of universal health-care systems around the world.”


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