# P05 / Mechanisms of policy change in health and social care reform

**Topic :** HEALTH POLICY

**Chair :** Carmen Huckel Schneider (University of Sydney)

**Second Chair :** Jennifer Smith-Merry (University of Sydney)

**Third Chair :** Sara Allin (University of Toronto)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In a post-covid era, many countries are revisiting health and social care systems with a shift in focus from technical to distributive efficiency for equity, access and resilience. Reforms are wide reaching, from governance and financing to new models of workforce participation, role shifting and system integration.

The aim of this panel is to delve into the mechanics of health and social care systems reform, by exploring mechanisms of change across system layers.

Policy sciences have long been interested in theories of policy change in a bid to better understand the context in which reforms are charted and how they lead to desired outcomes. Several strands of scholarship focus on ‘mechanisms of change’ as the key unit underlying causal relationships through attending to the underlying building blocks of policy design and its unique implementation process and outcomes (van der Heijden et al., 2021). In contrast to realist evaluation approaches which aim to assess whether policies achieve their stated objectives within stable policy processes through theorising causation, less attention has been paid to discerning the discrete mechanisms of change which operate across the trajectory of system reform – at various levels of government and transcending locations of authority and modes of control (Tenbensel, 2020, p.117). Against the constant tinkering with policy design by government to optimise the achievement of policy goals, a mechanistic approach is an opportunity to delve into how policy reform operates through a focus on ‘realistic causation’ (Capano & Howlett, 2021, p.142) of what will occur when change is applied to policy tools and instruments wielded by government, and to account for the foreseeable, or unforeseeable, impacts or consequences of reform.

Policy change – including the design, tools and instruments used by government, interactions and relationships that shape the achievement of policy goals – is a core issue at the centre of devising effective solutions in interconnected and complex policy systems. In this panel we aim to explore how policy reform produces behavioural changes during and after implementation, such as first- and second-order changes at the individual, group and sub-system levels (Capano & Howlett 2021), to better understand the dynamics of reform involving complex assemblages of actors, institutions and organisations with disparate motivations and interests.

We aim to bring together and deepen this scholarly work to explore the potential, and the realisation of, a mechanisms of change approach to policy reform in health or social care contexts.

Capano, G., & Howlett, M. (2021). Causal logics and mechanisms in policy design: How and why adopting a mechanistic perspective can improve policy design. Public Policy and Administration, 36(2), 141-162. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076719827068

Tenbensel, Tim. (2020). How do governments steer health policy? A comparison of Canadian and New Zealand approaches to cost control and primary health care reform. Policy Sectors in Comparative Policy Analysis Studies. (pp.115-131) Routledge.

van der Heijden, J., Kuhlmann, J., Lindquist, E., & Wellstead, A. (2021). Have policy process scholars embraced causal mechanisms? A review of five popular frameworks. Public Policy and Administration, 36(2), 163-186. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952076718814894

## CALL FOR PAPERS

In this panel we explore health and social care system reform taking a mechanisms of change approach.

Papers should explore policy reform through a lens which focuses on identifying the mechanisms which

create change. We are interested in papers which focus on the health and/or social care sectors, including (but not limited to) primary care, health system integration, mental health, disability, aged care and health equity. We are particularly interested in papers addressing the following themes:

Examples of health and policy system reform characteristic of post-Covid shifts towards allocative efficiency, equity and system integration.
Comparative approaches to policy reform involving causal mechanisms
Comparison of reform elements as way to identify, describe and explain the nature of reform and construct models to explain observable outcomes and their variance
Exploring how reform leads to behavioural changes within health or social care systems at the individual, group and sub-system levels
What opportunities does a mechanisms of change approach offer compared to other theories of change methodologies
Challenges associated with taking a mechanistic approach in complex causal chains of policy reform
We invite empirical, normative, theoretical, as well policy-in-practice papers that illuminate change mechanisms in health policy or social care contexts or to health or social care issues.

We welcome papers from disciplines that include (but are not limited to) health or social care policy, public policy, public administration and management, interpretive policy analysis, political science, political economy and comparative public policy.

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## Session 1

Wednesday, July 2nd 13:45 to 15:45 (A5)

### Reforms in India’s Mental Health Policy for Integration into Primary Healthcare

Anindita Dey (Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur (India))

Alok Ranjan (Indian Institute of Technology-Jodhpur)

Isha Sharma (Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur)

### The Occlusion of Rights for Services: Analysing the Shifting Contours of Narratives, Subsystems, and Decision-making for Disability Policy in Australia

Betsi Beem (University of Sydney)

### Rebuilding Adult Social Care: comparing Australian and British social experiments

James Gillespie (University of Sydney)

### Meeting Long-term Care Needs of Older Adults in Ageing Societies: case of Lithuania

Virginija Poskute (ISM University of Management and Economics)

### Trajectories of primary care reform in Canada and Australia: a mechanisms of change approach

Joanna Mason (University of Sydney)

Carmen Huckel Schneider (University of Sydney)

Stefanie Tan (University of Toronto)

Sara Allin (University of Toronto)

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## Session 2

Thursday, July 3rd 08:00 to 10:00 (A5)

**Influences of multi-level governance in Australian integrated care**

Alexandra de Souza (University of Sydney)

Carmen Huckel Schneider (University of Sydney)

**The political economy of priority-setting: A synthesis of frameworks for the prioritization of universal health coverage in low and middle income countries**

Ashley Fox (Rockefeller College, University at Albany)

**Political Sources of Health Inequities: Mechanisms of Policy Change in Disability Policies**

Ahmet Tar?k B?y?kl?o?lu (Bilkent University)

**The role of instrument constituencies in policy change: the case of primary care in France**

Anne Moyal (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Santé Publique / Sciences Po Paris)

Patrick Hassenteufel (Université Paris-Saclay)

**(Virtual) Title: What are the limitations of using the term ‘mechanism’ when building explanations of policy change?**

Tim Tenbensel (University of Auckland)

**IMPLEMENTATION DYNAMICS AND THE IMPACT OF THE HEALTH SUB-DISTRICT STRATEGY ON MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH OUTCOMES IN UGANDA (2000-2024): A REALIST EVALUATION**

Aloysius Ssennyonjo (Makerere University)