



Australian Health Care Reform Alliance

C/- PO Box 280 Deakin West ACT 2600 ABN 64 051 645 674
www.healthreform.org.au

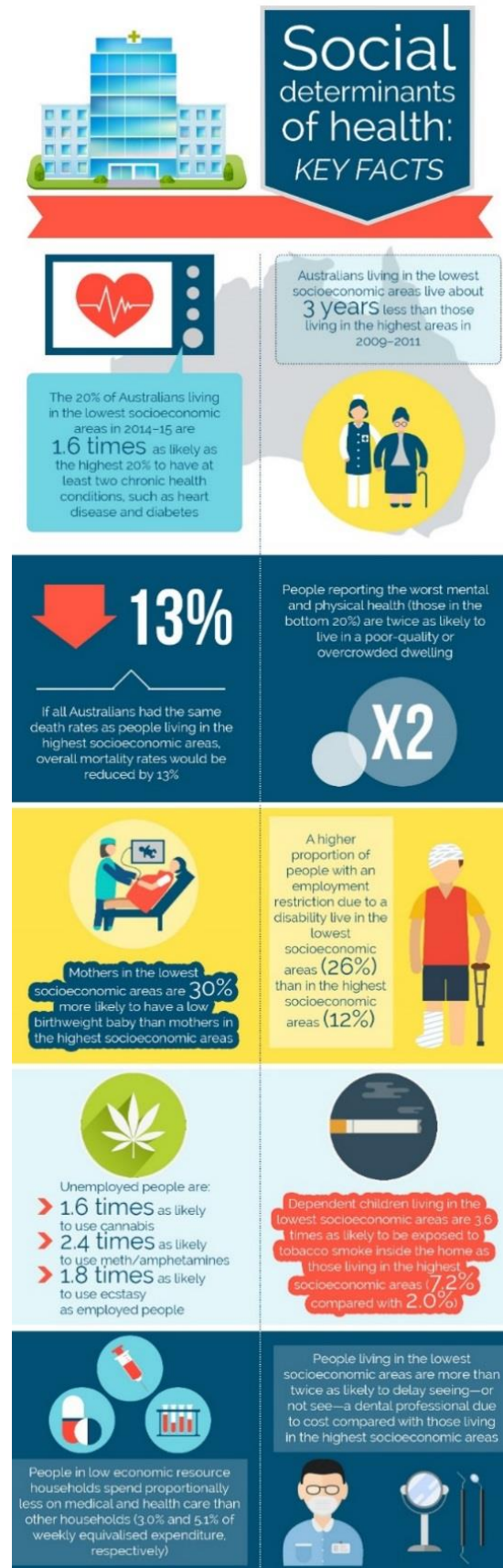
Why the are social determinants of health important?

The social determinants of health (SDH) are defined by the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

Social determinants have significant impacts on the health and well-being of people. While they are often not specifically addressed by health policies and programs they can have a greater impact on the health of individuals and communities than a hospital or health service. For this reason AHCRA advocates for a social determinants approach to health policies which takes into account the impact of broader economic, social and environmental factors on health and well-being.

An excellent overview of why social determinants are important in Australia is provided by Sir Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London in his 2016 Boyer lectures – [“Fair Australia: Social Justice and the Health Gap - exploring the challenges faced by communities in solving issues around health inequality”](#)

In 2013, the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs conducted an inquiry into [Australia's domestic response to the World Health Organization's \(WHO\) Commission on Social Determinants of Health](#). The report from this Inquiry, [Closing the gap within a generation](#), recommends a comprehensive approach to improving the health of disadvantaged groups in the community. AHCRA supports the full implementation of this report.





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[One study](#) has estimated that half a million Australians could be spared chronic illness, \$2.3 billion in annual hospital costs saved, and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescriptions cut by 5.3 million, if the health gaps between the most and least disadvantaged were closed.

Additional information on social determinants of health can be found in [Social Determinants of Health: The Solid Facts 2nd Edition](#) and [Social determinants of health inequalities](#) and in [Australia's Health 2016](#)

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