Issues Brief: Decarbonising clinical care in Australia

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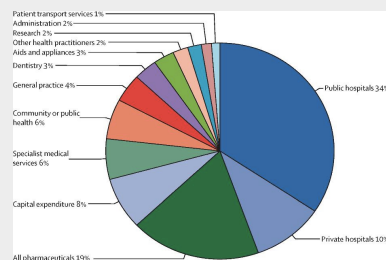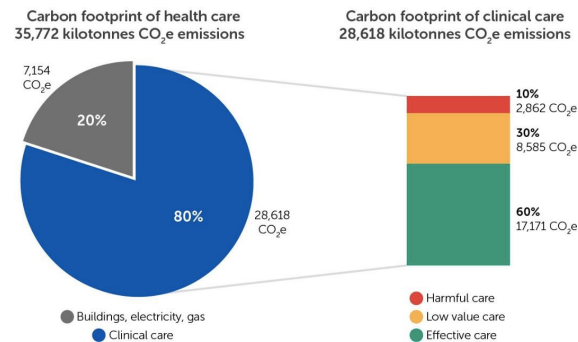
Healthcare's carbon footprint

- The Australian healthcare sector is a large polluter => **7% of national emissions** (higher than England, Canada, Japan, China)

- Largest share is hospitals (44%), and pharmaceuticals (19%)

- **~70%** of Australia's total carbon footprint is **clinical care**, with the rest being buildings and infrastructure

- Focus must shift to how healthcare is performed

- **Evidence at the granular level of clinical care is lacking** to identify carbon and low value care hotspots, to guide transition to low carbon healthcare

The environmental impact of low value care

- ~30% of clinical healthcare worldwide is wasteful or low value care (e.g. 12-44% of pathology tests)

- >8000 kilotonnes CO2e emissions could be saved in Australia/year by reducing low value care

> **Reducing** unnecessary investigations, medications, and **avoiding** clinically ineffective surgeries, procedures, and admissions
>
> =immediate **reduction in CO2e emissions**

- Integral to a low carbon health system is prioritising effective, efficient, evidence-based delivery of care at the right time

Recommendations:

- **Reduce** low value care and switch to low carbon options
  - Disinvestment in low value, high carbon care

- **Establish** nationally coordinated data collection, monitoring, and reporting

- **Add** carbon footprint indicators to health technology assessment processes

- **Decarbonise** healthcare supply chains

- **Establish** a national healthcare sustainability unit or task force

- **Invest** in research
  - Bottom-up LCA data collection & carbon footprint modelling

- **Build** carbon-literate health workforce