

You can find all articles in the **Prevention or patch-up?** series [here](#).

No.	Date this	Icon	Hotlink Intro	Keywords
1	29.2.24		Prevention or patch-up? Linking scientific knowledge with policy to advance human well-being The first in a series of articles examining theories of cause-and-effect that can lead to understanding health and education policies affecting well-being.	Rationale for Royal Societies involvement; need for a fresh approach; silo effect and reductionism; complex problems often reflect the absence of a strong coordinating centre able to steer the capacities of different sectors to a coherent conclusion; most parties are jurisdiction-bounded, partisan, sectoral, mistrusted, narrow in vision or chronically underfunded.
2	14.3.24		Prevention or patch-up? Public health 'crises' have long gestations Public health forums with specialist practitioners and scholars across jurisdictions, disciplines and sectors are desperately needed.	Crises often have multi-causal roots; sugar-laden diets in children result in overweight adults who turn up in health systems with chronic illnesses; humans have an addictive sweet tooth; capacity of governments to manage complex issues has been decaying with outsourcing of coordination to markets; Robodebt indicates diminished analytical capacity; cross-disciplinary forums needed.
3	28.3.24		Prevention or patch-up? Some preconditions are essential for public policy Every action in human affairs has consequences. This rather trivial observation has important implications for public policy.	Some preconditions are essential, some necessary, some desirable; necessary vs sufficient; mapping preconditions and consequences amounts to a feasible path; feasible path includes passions, powers, personnel, knowledge, purses; absence of one ingredient may be fatal; separation of frontline operatives from strategic decision-makers and budget managers is chronic; passion drives progress but cannot be measured; solutions require meticulous research, thoughtful deliberation and wide consultation.
4	11.4.24		Prevention or patch-up? Prevention needs coordinated powers or it's just patch-up The capacity to discharge a function, implement a strategy or deliver a service embraces two main elements: coordinating authority and legal power.	Solutions require empowered individuals both accountable for results and given the authority to achieve them; power means both coordinating authority and legal power; Commonwealth involvement in state responsibilities; fire ants; line command; hubris; APVMA; outsourcing and NDIS; outsourcing requires superior coordination

5	2.5.24		Prevention or patch-up? ‘Staff are our most valuable resource’ – really? How hollow are the clichéd management words said to any officer who has been a victim of organisational restructure, enforced redundancy, cuts to training budgets, forced casualisation or stonewalling in the HR department in response to a grievance!	Public servants suffer in silence; healthy personnel administration requires: allow some slack, minimise performance measurement; grant secure tenure; (tenure cultivates trust); SES from 1982; contract employment non-conducive to frank and fearless advice; long-term programs require long-term investment in staff.
6	9.5.24		Prevention or patch-up? Data, information, and knowledge are not ‘wisdom’ The skills that enable somebody to gain preselection and then sufficient community support for election are not the same skills required to formulate public policy.	Data, information, knowledge; respect street level knowledge; respect scholarship; researchers not policy analysts; scientific integrity; disciplinary straitjackets; tainted information; foundational data; ingredients of policy formulation.
7	23.5.24		Prevention or patch-up? Lack of political will behind failure to build healthy communities ‘Shortage of money’ is not really a valid excuse for failing to nourish the services that build healthy, peaceful communities.	Underfunded prevention shrinks to patch up; public goods require public funding; quality of life depends on public goods; markets cannot supply without manipulation; what doesn’t get funded doesn’t get done; neoliberal project has starved public goods; AUKUS; costs not differentiated from investment; shortage of money amounts to lack of political will; co-funding and commercial partners; efficiency dividends spawn inefficiency; Trove; National Museum.
8	6.6.24		Prevention or patch-up? Stopping domestic violence requires understanding its causes Focusing on causation would have been a responsibility of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. Unfortunately, writes Geoff Edwards, the task seems to have been flubbed.	Male misogyny, gender inequality and male behaviour are bases of National Plan; biologically inherent instinct of males to protect family, workgroup, tribal group becomes warped; financial inequality, substance abuse gambling primary causes; if everybody is responsible, nobody is accountable; individuals lack power to block pornography and misogynistic rhetoric, reduce inequality, JobSeeker, bludgers; incapacity of vulnerable individuals to change their behaviour a central challenge.
this 9	27.6.24		Prevention or patch-up? National plan to end gender violence must stand on robust theory Modern policymaking must take advantage of expert and lay knowledge from all quarters. It’s not just a matter of biology vs sociology.	Without robust theory, policy is ad hoc; domestic violence results from gender inequality shallow; Our Watch; masculine norms include dominance, self-reliance, competitiveness, control; these norms are said to be socially constructed not biological; nature vs nurture;

				social conditioning is superimposed upon biological canvas; hormonal disposition is not clinically binary; feminism and biology.
10	11.7.24		Prevention or patch-up? Male shame is a risk factor for domestic violence 'Shame' is an emotion typically felt by powerless men and can animate them to exercise aggressive power over others.	Male violence evidence of more fundamental family breakdown; exercise power or counter absence of power; masculine exuberance seen as misbehaviour; absence of a father; economic settings that crush people; Michael Salter and Jess Hill; deaths of despair and structured violence; structured violence the most powerful cause of behavioural violence; James Gilligan's Republicans vs Democrats; shame the proximal cause; lifters and leaners; family financial status a consequence of economic policy; prosperity theology; cost benefit of low JobSeeker
11	1.8.24		Prevention or patch-up? Individual responsibility for FASD doesn't make sense The reality of foetal spectrum disorder has profound implications for health policy, criminal justice policy, education policy and virtually every other field of public affairs.	Australian Dietary Guidelines; more children have foetal alcohol than autism etc; foetus lacks ability to metabolise; permanent damage can be early in first trimester; irreversible and lifelong; poor cognitive ability, incarceration, unemployability; tragic lifetime cost; proportions of women unaware of pregnancy or unplanned; Australian Registry; proportions in prison; Western Australian figures; adequate nutrition, community support are civic responsibilities; moral condemnation, foundation of criminal justice dissolves.
12	15.8.24		Prevention or patch-up? Does it really take a village to raise a child? Even capable families need support in raising children. In an industrialised society, this inevitably entails services funded by the state out of general taxation.	Evolutionary history fitted humans for circumscribed village life; humans are unusually dependent, up to 1/4 of their lifespan; Boulton explains the burden of nourishing a child is a weighty challenge for a couple, more for single-parent, requires a network of family and friends; mother and baby needs first-rate nourishment from birth till at least age 5, 2000 days; under-parenting leads to behavioural dysfunction; civic services that support parents should be funded generously; civic services constitute the enabling state, not the nanny state.

13	29.8.24		Prevention or patch-up? Being led into temptation The percentage of overweight Australians should be of major concern to the agencies and policy analysts concerned with public expenditure.	Shelves of chocolates and sweets are ubiquitous in retail outlets; in prehistory, concentrated sugar was rare (honey); spikes of glucose followed by spikes in insulin, leading to storage of fat; diabetes follows overloading of pancreas; 66% of adult males, 26% children overweight or obese, leads to diabetes, heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, some cancers; string of fiscal time bombs; remedy cannot be left to individual choice given advertising takes advantage of sweet craving.
14	4.9.24		Prevention or patch-up: Could the threat of a sugar tax work? More than 50 countries tax sugar-sweetened beverages to reduce consumption. The UK found that just the threat of a tax had some success.	Australians eat a kilogram of sugar per week, smuggled into diets, sweetened commercial foods; more than 50 countries tax sugar-sweetened beverages; UK gave two years' notice of taxing surplus sugar in drinks, industry dropped the level incrementally to below the threshold; dramatic reduction in total sugar consumption; phased withdrawal is possible and can be durable.
15	25.9.24		Prevention or patch-up? The hot button, modern calamity Alarm bells over global warming should be clanging loudly in the corridors of all the bureaux responsible for the well-being of our citizens, which is all of them.	Unfolding calamity of atmospheric heat threatens direct damage to health, to public infrastructure and institutions, to ecological systems and so food production; prolonged heat will stress plants, aquifers will dry up, trees will die, diseases spread and crop geographical tolerances shift; federal focus on reducing emissions overlooks urgent need for adaptation; Royal Societies seek funding for a Landscape and Seascape Policy Hub; evidence of unfolding calamity is incontrovertible, political leaders must shun denialists.
16	9.10.24		Prevention or patch-up? Heat stress is a modern scourge Runs of 38°+ days decrease labour productivity and are not encouraging young, energetic families back to the land.	More people die from heat stress than all other natural disasters; ambients above 40° challenge life; heat leads to less exercise and increased soft drinks and alcohol consumption; sporting fixtures potentially disrupted; difficult to recruit labour to maintain the pastoral inland; diseases and pests will spread; Margaret Thatcher warned in 1989; every undergraduate should qualify in climate policy.

17	23.10.24		Prevention or patch-up? Building standards can ease or worsen suffering Managerialist reforms at the local government level post-2010 resulted in a desperate need for reforms to climate adaptation.	Planning schemes changed from prescriptive to performance-based and applicant-led; inspection outsourced to certifiers; much housing stock not prepared for hot atmosphere, estates have inadequate links to open space; air-conditioners shift heat from one place to another and lose efficiency as temperature rises; NABERS is limited; official guidance tends to push responsibility onto builders or purchasers; pink batts; central coordination of standards and advocacy required; better subdivision design.
18	6.11.24		Prevention or patch-up? Measuring wellbeing can distract from achieving it Economics radiates a siren song to politicians wanting to track progress. But economics' value system relies heavily on price as the arbitrator of value, which is the wrong value system for wellbeing.	Quantitative indicators are inadequate for evaluating human behaviour; history of public accounting including China, Alfred Marshall, Cold War rivalry, System of National Accounts; supplementary indicators; New Zealand's Well-being Budget and Wales; measurement doesn't make a function manageable, funding is required; public interest is unquantifiable; risk that 'you can't manage what you can't measure' (half wrong) becomes 'you are to manage what you can measure', wholly inadequate for the public service..
19	28.11.24		Prevention or patch-up? You will probably mismanage what you measure wrongly Australia should frame all 2025 budgets towards achieving a Genuine Progress Indicator, for which there are several international and national templates.	GDP is irrelevant to family's well-being; Harvester judgement 1907 specified frugal comfort; shortcomings of GDP range from arithmetical to conceptual; an asset account not a balance sheet, doesn't flag depletion of raw materials or depreciation, implies more consumption is better; GDP measures only traded activities including those detrimental to well-being, not household effort; not value added by government; prices are assumed to be normative; faith in economic growth as the engine of progress unknown before 1950; 'growth' should be substituted by 'sustainable prosperity' as objective of policy.

20	12.12.24		Prevention or patch-up? 'Measuring what matters' helps, but... The next iteration of 'Measuring What Matters' should list the steps to give effect to the many implications for policy and public budgeting.	Critique of <i>Measuring What Matters</i>; five pillars – healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive, prosperous – are robust; mentions declining trust; unsatisfying measures of prosperity – aren't identifying the indicators of inequality and family breakdown; self congratulatory including positive reference to AUKUS; Productivity Commission stuck in unidimensional analysis.
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