

# 2023 Annual Report

GRATTAN INSTITUTE

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Grattan Institute produces high-quality public policy recommendations for Australia's future. Since we were established in 2008, our independent research has helped shape the Australian policy conversation, from childcare to the COVID-19 response, from superannuation to school funding, and well beyond.

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# A note from our Chair



As the past few years have shown, public policy debate in Australia has a multitude of voices, both well- and ill-informed. In a world where misinformation and disinformation grow louder, the contribution by Grattan Institute in the nation's public life is ever more important. In its 15-year history, Grattan has consistently provided measured, rigorous, independent, and practical analysis and recommendations for policy makers.

The contributions by Grattan Institute are distinctive and much sought-after. Grattan's work is cited frequently by ministers and shadow ministers, both federally and in the states and territories, as well as by civil society. Across all media, the Grattan team is interviewed, and its work cited, whether in newspapers, or on TV, radio, or online, in metropolitan or regional areas. Our social media presence, as well as weekly podcasts and regular online speed briefings and in-person public events, enable increasing numbers of Australians to join in the policy conversation.

In the following pages you will see the impressive work of each of Grattan's Programs. CEO Danielle Wood and her Budgets and Government Program released a series of reports focusing on the integrity of public offices, with the recommendations on appointments and pork-barrelling attracting support across the political spectrum. Their report on budget repair will continue to be influential over many years, as federal governments seek to address the structural challenges facing the budget.

Our Economic Policy Program has had recommendations from its housing research adopted at both federal and state levels, and its work on migration has similarly attracted high-level support. The Program has also been a key voice in the discussion of superannuation and taxation.





The Energy and Climate Change Program continues to play a leading role in the shape of current discourse, with its work on electricity and gas leading debate.

This past year has seen ongoing commitments from NSW and Victoria for improved curriculum materials and extension of small-group tutoring, both being policy recommendations championed by our Education Program. Nationally, the Australian Education Ministers' National Teacher Workforce Plan reflected many of the Program's recommendations.

The federal Budget in May 2023 invested over half a billion dollars in actions recommended by our Health Program, focusing on improvements to primary health care. The Program has received much support for its recommendations on an Australian Centre for Disease Control.

Our Transport and Cities Program has influenced reforms on infrastructure, with the federal government citing Grattan work and adopting recommendations to reform Infrastructure Australia and review projects. NSW and Victoria have adopted policies recommended through the Program's reports on discount rates and trucks.

We are excited to see the great work already being done in 2023-24, and with the introduction of our Disability Program, there are new areas of policy that will seek

to influence. As we welcome a new program, we will also be farewelling another. Marion Terrill, the Transport and Cities Program Director, will be leaving Grattan at the end of 2023 after eight years. As demonstrated above, Marion leaves with a long legacy of which she can be proud. While aspects of this work will carry forward through other Programs, the Transport and Cities Program will not be continuing beyond 2023. We thank Marion for her substantial contribution to Grattan over many years and wish her the best.

At the time of writing, CEO Danielle Wood is finishing her work at Grattan before taking up her appointment as Chair of the Productivity Commission. Dani is one of Australia's pre-eminent public policy thinkers and she will provide great public service through her term as Chair. While we are of course saddened to lose Dani from Grattan, we are simultaneously cheered that she is being recognised with this important role, and we wish her all the best in her appointment. The Board is presently undertaking a search for the next Grattan Institute CEO, to join us in the new year.

I want to conclude by thanking all Grattan's donors, whom we acknowledge within this report. Your continuing contributions will enable Grattan Institute to achieve its mission and become a permanent Institution in Australian public life, to the benefit of future generations.

Lindsay Maxsted, Chair

# CEO report



It's been a big year for public policy. Despite an uncertain external environment, federal and state governments have opened major policy discussions in key areas of domestic policy including health, education, migration, and energy policy.

Governments have been enthusiastic audiences for Grattan advice. This year we spent more time than ever engaging with policy makers via meetings, submissions, roundtables, committee hearings, presentations, and as members of expert advisory groups and taskforces. I sometimes joke that there aren't enough hours in the day, but for a think tank that aims to shape policy for the better, that's a very good problem to have!

All these policy interactions have translated into real influence. While successful policy changes have many mothers, there are so many policy initiatives and changes that I can point to and say, hand on heart, that Grattan played a key role in galvanising action.

We are particularly proud of the contribution our work made to major, and long overdue, changes to delivery of GP services; the adoption of high-quality shared curriculum materials for schools in NSW; the Housing Australia Future Fund; ramping up of the Safeguard Mechanism to tackle carbon emissions; proposed changes to skilled migration; and the increase in government paid parental leave, including reserved portions for dads and partners. All of these are discussed in more detail later in this report. But their take-up makes me optimistic about outcomes in these areas.

Our policy impact comes from the detailed research we publish, and the public and private advocacy we do to advance that work with decision makers.

It's a big impact for an organisation of only 28 staff, and I want to say thank you to our dedicated and passionate team who have all contributed to building a culture of curiosity, excellence, and fun.

This year we also announced the formation of a new Grattan Disability Program. The program, supported by the Summer Foundation, is an opportunity for Grattan to contribute its rigorous and practical approach to policy in a critical area.

We were delighted to appoint Dr Sam Bennett to lead the Program. Sam was formerly the Director of Policy and Advocacy at the NDIA and has a deep background in social policy. He will be joined by Senior Fellow, Alastair McEwin AM. Alastair has extensive knowledge and experience in disability advocacy and policy work. He was a Commissioner on the Disability Royal Commission and is a former Disability Discrimination Commissioner.

As I'll be leaving Grattan before the annual report is published, I also wanted to say what an honour and a privilege it has been to lead an organisation focused on improving lives of Australians through better public policy. I'm incredibly proud of all Grattan has achieved this year – and over its 15-year history. I think both policy and policy conversations are better for Grattan's existence.

It is ultimately our staff, our Board, and our supporters that make it all possible, so a huge thank you to all of you. I look forward to joining the ranks of the Grattan supporter base and seeing the organisation continue to grow and flourish under its new leadership.

Danielle Wood, CEO



# Grattan's influence

“

Grattan Institute, under Danielle Wood's leadership, is in my view a first-class institution.

**Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers on ABC Radio National, April 2023**

“

Grattan Institute is the federal government's go-to ideas factory.

**Tom Dusevic, National Chief Reporter, The Australian, April 2023**

“

Grattan Institute, the country's most influential think tank.

**AFR, May 2023**

“

Grattan Institute, the think tank that carries weight with the government.

**Paul Kelly, Editor-at-Large, The Australian, April 2023**

“

Grattan Institute is Australia's most recognised think tank, and its policy recommendations are regularly adopted by state and federal governments.

**AFR, May 2023**

# Policy impact highlights

*How Grattan work is changing the lives of Australians*

## A new Medicare

Our 2022 report *A new Medicare: Strengthening general practice* advocated for generational reform to Medicare, to ensure better care for patients in the decades to come.

The federal government's 'Strengthening Medicare' taskforce report, presented to National Cabinet in early 2023, reflected our recommendations. After receiving the 'Strengthening Medicare' report, Health Minister Mark Butler announced that the Government would change the way GPs are paid, as recommended in *A new Medicare*.

## Lower emissions

We have argued for reform of the Safeguard Mechanism since 2016. Reforms passed by Federal Parliament in 2023 included several of our recommendations: declining caps on industrial emissions, fairer and more effective ways of calculating these caps, credits for facilities that emit less than their cap allows, and ending government financial support to coal and gas facilities.

In 2023, the Federal Government announced it would introduce a carbon-emissions ceiling on new car sales, as recommended in our *Towards net zero* series of reports (2021) and in *The Grattan car plan* (2021).

## Better schools

Our 2020 *Covid catch up* and 2023 *Tackling underachievement* reports advocated for small-group tutoring for students who fell behind during pandemic lockdowns. Since then, the NSW and Victorian governments have invested about \$2 billion in small-group tutoring to help struggling students.

Our reports on teacher workloads, *Making time for great teaching* and *Ending the lesson lottery*, have had a significant impact on education policy, prompting big investments in new curriculum resources for teachers across the NSW, Victorian, and Catholic education systems. Many of our policy recommendations were reflected in the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan released in December 2022, including a \$25 million Workload Reduction Fund.

## More-affordable housing

The Albanese Government has established a \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, based on a Grattan Institute proposal.

It will provide more housing for the people who need it most, with funding for thousands of social and affordable homes across Australia.

## Cheaper childcare

On 1 July 2023, more affordable and accessible childcare became a reality for Australian parents as the Federal Government's \$5.4 billion cheaper childcare package came into effect. The package will help young children and boost women's workforce participation.

We have long advocated for more-affordable early learning and care, and proposed a similar package in our 2020 report, *Cheaper childcare: A practical plan to boost female workforce participation*.

## The 'Goldilocks' threshold

In 2023, federal Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil announced the lifting to \$70,000 of the wage threshold for temporary skilled migrants, as recommended in Grattan's 2022 report, *Fixing temporary skilled migration*.

In making the announcement, she noted that we had called \$70,000 the 'Goldilocks' threshold.

## Safer roads

The federal government announced it would invest \$4 billion to fix country roads, a week after our report, *Potholes and pitfalls: How to fix local roads*, called for significantly increased funding to repair rural roads.

After reviewing infrastructure spending, the federal government removed its funding for commuter car parks, and several infrastructure projects, as recommended in our 2022 report *Roundabouts, overpasses, and carparks: Hauling the federal government back to its proper role in transport projects*.

15

REPORTS PUBLISHED

139

OPINION PIECES

40,782

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45,364

MEDIA MENTIONS

58,948

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ENGAGEMENTS

239

SPEECHES

160

OFFICIAL CITATIONS



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Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne

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# Budgets and Government



**Danielle Wood**

Budgets and Government  
Program Director

In 2022-23, the Budgets and Government team released a series of reports on integrity in public office. The *New politics* series looked at ways that politicians can misuse their powers for private and political gain, including appointing ‘mates’ to powerful or well-paid roles on government boards, allocating government grants based on electoral consideration rather than need (‘pork-barrelling’), and using taxpayer-funded advertising to spruik the government of the day.

The reports generated broad discussion about integrity in decision making – and what can be done to restore it – and contributed to some important policy changes. The government announced an independent review of board appointment processes, and abolished the Administrative Appeals Tribunal on the basis of concerns about cronyism. This was one of the government bodies that Grattan’s work identified as having a high and growing share of appointees with a political background.

In addition, several independent MPs introduced bills that picked up our key recommendations on appointments, pork-barrelling of grants, and political advertising.

We also delivered new analysis on budget repair priorities, releasing our report, *Back in the black? A menu of measures to repair the budget* in the lead-up to the May federal Budget. The report’s release included a pre-budget address to the National Press Club.

The report argued that given the government’s medium-term budget challenge, some measures to reduce spending and raise revenues would be needed. The report set out a ‘menu’ of costed options for government to consider.

And while budget repair is on the backburner following the first budget surplus in 15 years – helped by strong labour markets and commodity prices – the structural problem is not going away. The government picked up one of our suggested reforms – redesigning the petroleum resource rent tax – in the May budget. More are likely to be needed over time.

# Economic Policy



**Brendan Coates**

Economic Policy Program Director

This year, Grattan's Economic Policy Program has continued to influence housing, migration, tax, and retirement incomes policy in Australia.

The Albanese Government established the Housing Australia Future Fund, and reinstated the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council – both recommendations of Grattan. The Government also agreed to incentive payments totalling \$3 billion to the states if they exceed targets for new housing as part of a plan to build 1.2 million homes over the next five years. This was one of the recommendations in our 2018 report, *Housing affordability: Re-imagining the Australian dream*.

The Victorian Government's Housing Statement, released in September 2023, contained a number of initiatives recommended by Grattan, including the expansion of the Future Homes initiative across all of Victoria. Under the initiative, medium-density developments that adopt award-winning designs are assessed under a streamlined planning process, which should result in more and better-quality homes built in the established suburbs where people want to live and work.

State governments have announced plans to reform planning rules and increase density in major cities, in line with Grattan recommendations. This leaves the program ideally placed to influence governments on how best to implement planning reforms to lower housing costs.

The Program's work on migration policy has become more influential. Several of our recommendations have been implemented by the Albanese Government, including

expanding the number of permanent employer-sponsored visas available, and significantly scaling back the number of Business Investment and Innovation visas.

The Review of Australia's Migration System, led by Dr Martin Parkinson, was released by the government in April. The Review contained many recommendations in line with our submission and cited our analysis of problems with the current migration system.

In May, the team published its latest report, *Short-changed: How to stop the exploitation of migrant workers in Australia*. The Immigration Minister cited our research when introducing the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill in June, with many of the reforms in the Bill lining up with our recommendations. Another workplace relations bill also included some of our report's recommendations, including introducing criminal penalties for intentional underpayment of wages and increasing maximum penalties for underpayment of wages.

The program has continued to lead the debate on reform of superannuation tax concessions. The government's plan to tax the earnings on balances above \$3 million at 30 per cent is consistent with a recommendation in this year's report, *Super savings: Practical policies for fairer superannuation and a stronger budget*. Both the Prime Minister and Treasurer publicly referred to Grattan's work, and our other recommendations have framed public debate on where the government could go next on super tax.





# Education



**Jordana Hunter**

Education Program Director



Grattan Institute's education reports have been highly influential over the course of the year as federal and state governments continue to grapple with concerns about equity and excellence in education, workload pressures on teachers, and potential teacher shortages.

Following on from our close look at teacher workloads in our *Making time for great teaching* project, the team published *Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools* in October 2022, and a guide for principals in March 2023. Drawing on a Grattan survey of 2,243 teachers and school leaders, and five in-depth school case studies, these reports drilled into the specific challenges teachers face in developing high-quality lesson materials.

We found that only 15 per cent of teachers have access to high-quality shared materials for all their subjects, and the situation is significantly worse in disadvantaged schools. Not only does this exacerbate pressures on teachers – we estimate it adds three hours a week of unnecessary workload – it also risks undermining quality instruction. We called for a multi-pronged reform strategy to address this challenge, including greater investment in high-quality curriculum materials that schools can adopt and adapt, if they choose.

There has been strong interest in the reports, and the team has spoken to senior policy makers and principals around the country. We are pleased to see significant recent investment in new curriculum materials in NSW and Victoria and in the Catholic education systems.

Many of the recommendations from our *Making time for great teaching* project were also reflected in the Australian Education Minister's National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, including a commitment to trial new approaches to reducing teacher workload through a \$25 million Workload Reduction Fund, and a commitment to identify the most effective use of teaching assistants and non-teaching staff.

Following on from our June 2020 *COVID catch-up* report, the Education team published *Tackling underachievement – Why Australia should embed high-quality, small-group tuition in schools*, and a principals guide, in January 2023, with support from the Origin Energy Foundation. These reports set out the steps Australia should take to embed small-group tutoring in all Australian schools. Grattan was pleased to see ongoing commitments from NSW and Victoria to small-group tutoring, with funding extended until at least 2025. This brings the total funding commitments for small-group tutoring since 2021 to about \$2 billion.

Alongside leading Grattan's education policy research and advocacy, I was appointed to federal Education Minister Jason Clare's Expert Panel to advise on key targets and specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next Commonwealth-state funding agreement. The Panel has consulted extensively, and visited 92 schools across the country, to prepare its advice to education ministers on strategies to boost student outcomes, improve equity, and attract and retain teachers.

# Energy and Climate Change



**Tony Wood**

Energy and Climate Change  
Program Director

This year delivered a roller coaster of events that tested every dimension of Australia's energy system and climate change policies. Grattan's Energy and Climate Change Program made important contributions to policy debates on the impact of the Ukraine war, deteriorating gas supply, electricity generation uncertainty, high energy prices, and slow progress on climate mitigation.

Creating and maintaining momentum to meet emissions reduction and renewable electricity targets has become a major issue. What looked like a relatively narrow set of policies rapidly became a plethora of programs, mechanisms, and funds that have stretched the government's own resources. Grattan has been actively engaged in this policy development through both formal submissions and informal consultation.



For example, a Labor revision to the Coalition's Safeguard Mechanism creates a market-based mechanism to reduce emissions in heavy industry, a sector that would otherwise become the biggest source of domestic emissions. Grattan was an early supporter of this mechanism.

Our report released in July 2022, *The next industrial revolution: Transforming Australia to flourish in a net-zero world*, argues that the scale and pace of the economic transformation demands a 21st Century industry policy. The report became the basis for submissions and discussion with the government on how it should deploy multi-billion-dollar funds focused on Australia's comparative advantages in renewable energy and critical mineral resources.

Historically, electricity generation has been the largest contributor to Australia's emissions. Growth in renewables has been strong but has fallen behind the pace necessary to meet the federal government's target of 82 per cent by 2030, largely due to challenges in building the transmission infrastructure needed to support large-scale renewables. Grattan has been closely involved in developing solutions to this challenge, engaging with governments through submissions and direct consultation. Progress towards a clear solution has, unfortunately, been unsatisfactory.

Electricity and gas prices became a problem for the Labor government shortly after its election and only worsened as events in Ukraine and elsewhere unfolded. The impact on energy prices was unavoidable and we strongly supported action by the government to impose temporary price restrictions.

Beyond supply and pricing concerns, the future role of gas is now being seriously questioned given its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Our report, *Getting off gas: why, how, and who should pay*, addressed this challenge head-on, and its confronting recommendations triggered wide and sustained debate.



# Health



**Peter Breadon**

Health Program Director

This year the federal government embarked on several significant reforms to general practice that we had proposed in our December 2022 report, *A new Medicare: Strengthening general practice*.

The federal budget invested more than half a billion dollars in actions we recommended, including funding for Primary Health Networks to commission nursing and allied health workers, a new blended funding model for GP care, and a national review of primary care workforce regulations.

These changes will make general practice more multi-disciplinary, improve access to care, and reward quality and continuity of care. They are essential steps towards improved chronic disease management that will keep people healthier and out of hospital.

As these policies have been developed, we have urged policy makers to be ambitious. We have argued for a funding model that makes big changes to the financial incentives for clinics, moving away from the pressure to churn patients through as quickly as possible, regardless of how complex their needs are. And we have pushed for regulatory reform that ensures everyone working in general practice can use all their skills.

The changes this year have been described as the start of a multi-year process, and we have pointed to gaps in the agenda that must be filled as it develops, including ensuring better access to care in rural and remote areas.

In 2023, we released three reports on prevention. The first showed how the new Centre for Disease Control should be set up to prevent chronic disease, which is the biggest killer in Australia.

The second report proposed tougher rules to limit the amount of salt in manufactured food. Stronger regulation would save hundreds of lives a year, while saving money for both governments and citizens.

Finally, we released a report that highlighted low uptake of adult vaccinations, particularly in certain communities, and showed how governments can lead a vaccination reset as Australia emerges from the COVID pandemic.

These reports show how far behind Australia has fallen. We spend less than most other wealthy countries on prevention, we lack a system to prioritise investment, we don't have commonsense rules to make foods healthier, and our adult vaccination policies lack ambition and clarity.

With huge and growing demand pressures on GPs and hospitals, there seems to be growing acknowledgment that Australia needs to get serious about prevention. In addition to the reports discussed above, we have contributed to lively public debates about limiting junk food advertising to children, taxing sugar-sweetened beverages, and improving access to preventive dental care.





# Transport and Cities



## Marion Terrill

Transport and Cities Program  
Director

Grattan's Transport and Cities program has been influential in the reform of Infrastructure Australia, in improving the selection and management of major projects, and in policies to cut transport emissions.

The federal government has introduced a bill to reform Infrastructure Australia, following a review that Minister Catherine King justified by citing Grattan's 2020 report, *The rise of megaprojects*. The bill includes our recommendations to require post-completion reviews, and to evaluate infrastructure projects against the assumptions underpinning the decision to invest.

The Minister also adopted our recommendation to conduct a stocktake of all projects in the 10-year pipeline. Grattan has argued since early 2020 that governments should pause or halt projects in light of capacity constraints and budget pressures. Victoria has now put two megaprojects on ice, as NSW did last year.

A welcome change on project appraisal has been NSW's decision to update its social discount rate, with the central rate moving from 7 per cent real to 5 per cent. This was a recommendation of our 2018 report, *Unfreezing discount rates*.

Since we published *The Grattan truck plan* in August 2022, the federal government has taken up our recommendation to catch up with the rest of the world by introducing Euro VI pollution standards, and Victoria has taken on our recommendation to introduce a scheme to compensate owners of dirty old trucks with a truck scrappage scheme. The federal government has also adopted our light-vehicle recommendations to bring forward a sulfur limit in petrol of 10ppm to 2024, and to introduce real-world vehicle testing in the form of the Worldwide Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure.

Our February report, *Fuelling budget repair*, triggered a public discussion about the role of fuel tax credits as a growing cost to the budget, particularly in the absence of a comprehensive means of taxing the contribution that burning diesel makes to carbon emissions. Our report was discussed in Parliament every day in the week of its publication, in both chambers, and was the subject of media releases by the National Farmers Federation and the Minerals Council. This challenging issue remains on the tax reform agenda.

# Financial statement

	2020-21	2022-23
	\$'000	\$'000
Endowment Income		
Interests and Dividends	812	2,686
Realised Gains (Losses) from the Sale of Investments	10	64
Movement in the Market Value of Investments	(2,570)	1,624
Investment Rebates	96	75
Less: Investment Management Fees	(245)	(331)
Total Interest and Investment Income	(1,897)	4,118
Additions to the Endowment		
Donations	1,812	1,875
Total Additions to the Endowment	1,812	1,875
Total Endowment Income	(85)	5,993
Operating Result		
Operating Revenue	531	713
Operating Expenditure	(4,897)	(5,174)
Operating Surplus (Deficit)	(4,366)	(4,461)
Total Entity Surplus (Deficit)	(4,451)	1,532
Equity	30,988	32,520

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and 175 anonymous  
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contributed a total of  
\$60,079.