**NURS 5010**

**National Health Plan Case Study**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country: Australia** | | | | |  |
| **Description of Nation** | **Summation of Health Plan** | **Health Coverage** | **Access to Care** | **Cost** | **Prevention** |
| Australia is a well developed, high-income country with an established healthcare system known for providing quality care through a combination of public and private sectors. The country consistently ranks among the top nations globally for life expectancy, healthcare outcomes, and access to healthcare services. The Australian healthcare system is often regarded as one of the most efficient in the world due to its universal coverage, well-managed public-private partnerships, and focus on preventive care. The system is built on equity, ensuring that all citizens and permanent residents have access to healthcare services regardless of income or location (Duckett & Willcox, 2015). | Australia’s healthcare system is built around Medicare, a publicly funded program that provides universal health coverage to all Australian citizens and permanent residents. Medicare was introduced in 1984 and covers a broad range of services, including hospital care, visits to general practitioners (GPs), certain specialist services, and diagnostic tests. Medicare operates through a taxation system, with a levy (the Medicare Levy) imposed on individuals' taxable income. This ensures that the healthcare system remains sustainable and accessible for all Australians. The government also subsidizes prescription medications through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), which significantly lowers out-of-pocket expenses for essential medications (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022). This scheme ensures that the cost of vital medications is kept affordable, an essential part of the government’s approach to health coverage (PBS, 2008). | Australia's healthcare coverage is comprehensive, covering essential services like inpatient and outpatient hospital care, GP visits, pathology, and diagnostic imaging. However, some services, such as dental care, are not universally covered under Medicare. For these, Australians often seek private health insurance, which provides additional coverage for non-hospital services like dental, optometry, and physiotherapy, and offers quicker access to specialists and elective surgeries. Private health insurance also helps reduce the financial burden on the public system by covering services that would otherwise increase demand on public hospitals (Department of Health, Australian Government, 2023). This dual system of public and private healthcare allows Australians to choose between public services, funded by taxes and the Medicare Levy, or faster private care, which may incur additional costs (PBS, 2008). | Australia's healthcare system provides good access to care, especially through the public hospital network, which is available to all citizens and permanent residents. The system ensures equitable access, regardless of socio-economic status, and public hospitals are distributed across urban and rural areas. While emergency services are available without charge, non-urgent care may face waiting times, especially for elective surgeries and specialist services. The government has recognized the need for improved healthcare access in rural and remote areas, with initiatives to encourage healthcare professionals to work in underserved regions. Telehealth services have also gained traction, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, further expanding access to care (Duckett & Willcox, 2015). The PBS film *Sick Around the World* highlights that while Australia’s universal healthcare system provides equitable access, waiting times for non-urgent services can be a concern in certain parts of the system (PBS, 2008). | The Australian healthcare system is largely funded through taxation, including a mandatory Medicare Levy of 2% of an individual's taxable income, with higher earners potentially paying an additional surcharge if they don’t have private health insurance. While the cost of healthcare is mainly covered through taxes, patients often incur out-of-pocket expenses for services not fully funded by Medicare, such as certain specialist consultations, dental services, and elective procedures. Private health insurance plays an important role in helping to cover these costs and provides faster access to services. Despite these additional costs, the overall expenditure on healthcare in Australia is relatively low compared to other high-income nations, due to the efficiency of the Medicare system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022). *Sick Around the World* (PBS, 2008) emphasizes how the Australian government controls healthcare costs through a mixed model of public financing and private participation, reducing overall national healthcare spending. | Australia places emphasis on preventive healthcare to improving public health and reducing long-term healthcare costs. The government supports various public health programs, including immunization campaigns, anti-smoking initiatives, and programs aimed at reducing alcohol and drug abuse. Preventive services are largely covered under Medicare, with programs targeting chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer. The Australian government’s health promotion activities focus on education, lifestyle changes, and early intervention. In recent years, there has also been a significant push towards improving mental health services, with programs designed to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues and improve early diagnosis and treatment (Department of Health, Australian Government, 2023). The PBS film *Sick Around the World* (2008) highlights the importance of preventive care in Australia, revealing that the country’s stand on immunization and early screening programs helps reduce the long-term burden on the healthcare system. |

References:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). *Australia’s health 2022*. AIHW. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/australias-health-2022>

Department of Health, Australian Government. (2023). *Medicare benefits schedule*. Retrieved from <https://www.health.gov.au/medicare>

Duckett, S., & Willcox, S. (2015). *The Australian healthcare system* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

PBS. (2008). *Sick around the world* [Film]. Public Broadcasting Service.