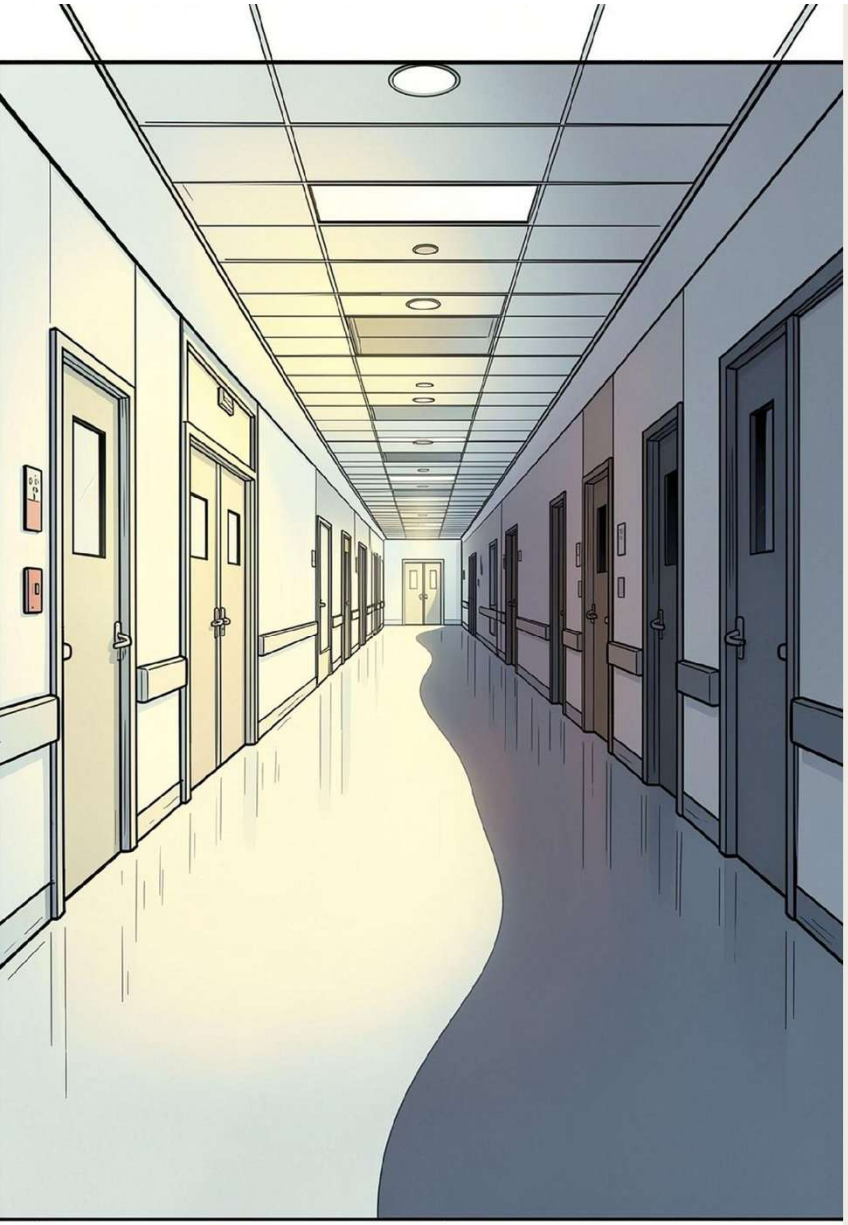
VHLC OPEN ACCESS AGREEMENTS · YEAR ONE

Advancing Equity in Clinical Research Publishing

Gemma Siemensma – Grampians Health
Cassandra Gorton – Monash Health
John Prentice – Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)





THE PROBLEM

A Structural Divide in Australian Research Publishing

Hospital-based clinicians and researchers are excluded from CAUL's Read & Publish agreements, which serve university staff and students. Without institutional APC funding, they face financial and procedural barriers their university peers do not — reinforcing inequities in authorship and scholarly visibility.

University Researchers

Covered by CAUL Read & Publish agreements — APC-free OA publishing

Hospital Researchers

No national agreement — reliant on departmental funds, personal finances, or restrictive institutional processes

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THE SOLUTION

The Victorian Health Library Consortium



The VHLC is a collaborative consortium of Victorian health libraries serving metropolitan and regional healthcare professionals, as well as several medical colleges. In 2023, VHLC issued an open access mandate to vendors and began transitioning its agreements to Read & Publish models.

In **2025**, VHLC launched Australia's first OA publishing agreements specifically for hospital-based researchers — positioning health libraries as central agents in equitable scholarly communication.

Consortium Purchasing

Collective negotiation amplifies institutional leverage

OA Transformation

Publisher agreements redesigned to eliminate APC barriers

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YEAR ONE OUTCOMES

Publishing Output & Financial Impact

57

OA Publications

$345K

APCs Avoided

4

Publishers*

APCs are the most widely documented barrier to open access publishing. For hospital clinicians, VHLC's agreements remove a structural obstacle that previously required reliance on departmental budgets or personal funds — restoring parity with university-affiliated authors.

*LWW/OVID; Springer Nature; Oxford University Press; Cambridge University Press

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RESEARCH METRICS

Quality, Visibility & Early Citation Uptake



Median Journal Quartile: Q2

Publications spanned Q1–Q4, reflecting broad disciplinary reach

Average Impact Factor: 4.6

An indicator of journal visibility and citation performance

296 Citations (Oct 2026)

Early engagement reflecting emerging influence of hospital-based research

OA publishing enhances readership and dissemination beyond academic audiences, strengthening opportunities for translation into clinical practice.

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POLICY ALIGNMENT

Aligned with Victorian Health Priorities

VHLC-supported publications showed strong alignment with the **Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023–2027**, demonstrating how equitable OA access enables dissemination of clinically relevant, policy-informing research.



Wellbeing Across the Lifespan

Primary alignment with statewide population health goals



Sexual & Reproductive Health

Strategic area supported by multiple VHLC publications



Climate-Related Health Impacts

Research addressing environmental determinants of health



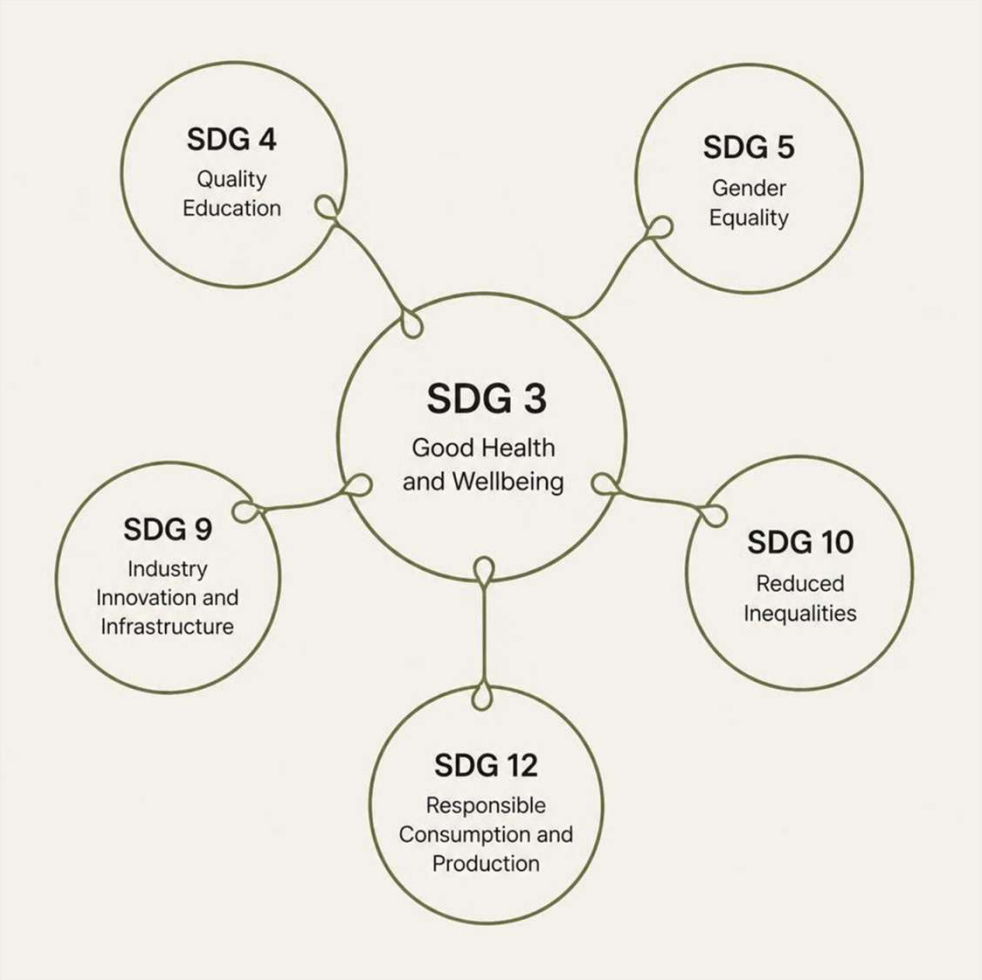
Antimicrobial Resistance

Clinically urgent topic with direct policy relevance

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GLOBAL IMPACT

Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals



The 57 OA publications map strongly to **SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing**, reflecting the patient-centered nature of hospital research. Secondary alignment spans five additional goals.

APC-driven inequities restrict research from low-resource settings, undermining SDG principles. By removing financial barriers, VHLC's model strengthens the hospital sector's contribution to global development objectives.

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INTERNATIONAL REACH

Small State, Far Reach

Despite Victoria's modest geographic footprint, VHLC-enabled publications demonstrate broad international collaboration, with co-authors from **nine countries** across four continents.



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LIBRARY LEADERSHIP

The Role of Libraries & Librarians



Hospital and college librarians were instrumental in implementing and sustaining VHLC's OA agreements. Their work reflects the evolving role of health libraries as active agents in scholarly communication.

Negotiation & Advocacy

Engaging publishers to secure equitable Read & Publish terms

Researcher Support

Managing eligibility workflows and guiding authors through OA submission

Training & Literacy

Delivering OA education, metadata expertise, and policy compliance guidance

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CONCLUSION

A Model for Equitable Scholarly Communication

The first year of VHLC's OA agreements demonstrated measurable benefits: expanded research visibility, significant APC savings, enhanced equity between hospital and university researchers, and strong alignment with state and global health priorities.

Equity Restored

Hospital clinicians can publish openly without financial penalty

High Impact

57 publications, 269 citations, international collaboration across 9 countries

Future Secured

Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Karger & BMJ Journals joined in 2026 — Victoria positioned as an OA innovator

