



# KEEPING AUSTRALIA ALIVE

A single day. 100 cameras.  
The Australian health system.

#KeepingAustraliaAlive





**A landmark documentary event capturing the Australian health system in one snapshot.  
The story of who we are, what we value and how we live and die.**

## **KEEPING AUSTRALIA ALIVE**

**Seven-part series starts Tuesday 15 March at 8.30pm on ABC**

This series is about us. And it's about the Australian health system. It's both.

It's a snapshot of what happens over a single day in our unique health service, stretched from one end of the continent to the other. How healthy is our health system? What are the challenges of distance, of recurring national problems (like obesity, melanoma, substance abuse and mental health)? These are the human stories (patients and staff), the character, jeopardy, drama and heart. This series is about us and our relationships; about joy, fear, uncertainty and hope.

As individuals our relationship with the health system begins when we are no more than the blue line on the pregnancy test and ends when we are a flat line on the ECG. By looking closely at our health system we also put ourselves under the microscope. How do we live? What do we value? What is the quality of our lives? What are our priorities? How do we want to live and die?

It is also about the future. With advances in medicine, the escalating costs of sophisticated or ongoing treatment, and our ever-aging population – how will we as a nation face the challenges ahead?

This landmark series will confront and surprise the audience with the real stories of what makes up Australia's massive system of care and service, which we often take for granted. What are the inequities between public and private systems, between east and west, between country and city? What specific challenges do we face with a system that needs to cater for everything from the most remote indigenous community to the busiest city hospital?

What human dramas unfold, every day, within it and what do they tell us about ourselves? What do they tell us about modern Australia?

What do we (staff and patients) feel about our health care system? What does it mean to us collectively, as well as individually?

What do we discover when we dissect the health system— slicing through its layers, its wonder, its horror, its enormity, all on one selected, ordinary day?

**PRODUCTION DETAILS:** 7 x 60 minutes. ITV Studios Australia. Executive Producer Karen Dewey. Series Producer Elle Gibbons. ITV Head of Content Ben Ulm. ABC Commissioning Editor Matt Scully. ABC Head Factual Steve Bibb.

**INTERVIEW REQUESTS & INFORMATION:** Rachel Fergus, ABC TV Publicity, on 02 8333 5085, 0416 263 194 or [fergus.rachel@abc.net.au](mailto:fergus.rachel@abc.net.au).



# KEEPING AUSTRALIA ALIVE

**Today more than 800 babies will be born.**

**Today more than 1000 patients will be treated in a hospital trauma department. 27 will die.**

**Today 35 babies will be born thanks to IVF assistance.**

**Today 70 Australian babies will be born pre-term.**

**Today an estimated 1.2 million Australians are looking after someone with dementia.**

**Today, every ten minutes someone will suffer a stroke.**

**Today 40 Australian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. 7 women will die.**

**Today more than 3500 surgeries will be performed.**

**Today 56 Australians will die of kidney related disease.**

**Today more than 1100 Australians are on the waiting list for a kidney transplant.**

**Today almost a third of Australians are obese. Our obesity rate is increasing faster than anywhere else in the world. It's overtaken smoking as a leading cause of death and is the biggest contributor to 200 new diabetes diagnoses every day.**

**Today more than 12000 Australians will need dialysis to keep them alive.**

**Today ambulance services in Victoria will receive one call per minute.**

**Today 8 babies will be born with a heart defect.**

**Today 1000 litres of blood will be needed to meet patient demand.**

**Today 80 men will undergo a vasectomy.**

**Today more than 47 Australian men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. 9 will die.**

**Today 700000 Australians will visit a GP.**

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## Episode Synopses

### **Episode One: Cradle to Grave – Tuesday 15 March at 8.30pm on ABC**

The first episode examines the role of the Australian health system from cradle to grave. Today in Australia 35 babies will be born with fertility assistance. Chrissie and Rob have been trying to have a baby for many years. They have completed another IVF cycle and now they are desperately hoping for a positive result to a pregnancy test. Meanwhile, Vanessa is altruistically donating her eggs to a couple who advertised looking for a donor on Facebook. On Bribie Island, 79 year old Rita Kok is one of the army of Australians looking after loved ones at home. Rita's husband Elbert has advanced dementia. Forty one year old mother of four Lisa Clark collapsed at home near Ballarat. She's been rushed to Royal Melbourne hospital with a burst brain aneurysm. As the trauma team works urgently, every minute counts. Rural generalist John Douyere lives and works in the small community of Longreach. He describes his patients as his friends and his friends as his patients. Today he has a difficult consultation with an old friend discussing the details of an Advance Health Directive in preparation in the event of death.

### **Episode Two: What's in a Postcode? – Tuesday 22 March at 8.30pm on ABC**

Archie and Jean Lauriston's daughter suffers chronic kidney disease and for the last four years she's been kept alive by dialysis. In this episode Jean gives the gift of her kidney to save her daughter's life. Morris Gibson also needs regular dialysis to keep him alive, but he lives more than 500 kilometres from the nearest hospital. At The Purple House in Kintore, NT he is treated 'on country' in one of the world's most remote dialysis clinics. Allen Sheedy moved from NSW to Tassie to enjoy the quiet life. Instead he was suddenly faced with inoperable cancer and the prospect of dying alone, far from family. The ambulance services receive at least one call every minute in Australia. We go onto the front line in Victoria with single responder intensive care paramedic, Andrew Burns. He attends a patient who appears to be suffering a mysterious form of anaphylaxis and resuscitates a drug and alcohol affected man. And in Sydney, a trauma team is faced with a difficult and aggressive patient.

### **Episode Three: Heal Thyself– Tuesday 29 March at 8.30pm on ABC**

What impact can we have on our own outcomes? In this episode we meet mother of four Annie and her husband Gerry from Perth as they face the toughest day of their lives. Annie has aggressive breast cancer in one breast, but she has made the decision to have both her breasts removed to give herself the best chance of living cancer-free. Ron Ryan from Daylesford Victoria takes his mum Jane for some tests to discover why she's been having problems with her memory. Together they hear the 'scary words' that make up Jane's diagnosis. In the neonatal ward where extremely premature babies fight for life, a young mother holds her eight day old newborn for the very first time. Sixty four year old Larry McCarthur is obese... a problem affecting nearly one third of all adult Australians. Larry weighs more than 160 kilos. He suffers severe osteoarthritis in his knees and can barely walk 20 steps. Today he hopes that will change when he undergoes a gastric sleeve operation. The surgery will reduce the size of his stomach to a little wider than a garden hose.

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## Episode Synopses

### **Episode Four: Love and Sacrifice – Tuesday 5 April at 8.30pm on ABC**

Fifty three year old Danny Hudswell has Parkinson's disease. The uncontrollable tremors limit his day to day life to the extent he can't even drink a cup of tea. Surgeons perform an awake craniotomy adjusting the signals of the brain to try to control his symptoms. In Brisbane, nine month old Ariana has a hole in her heart that must be repaired. Her mother and father face a very difficult day, made much harder when Mum's health complication forces her to seek treatment at a nearby emergency hospital. Boigu is the most northern island in the Torres Straits and is the outer limit of our health system. This is frontier medicine, still dealing with illnesses like tuberculosis and leprosy. A machete injury comes in from Papua New Guinea and a young girl arrives with mysterious pain and swelling in both knees. A patient is rushed to emergency in Melbourne's Alfred Hospital suffering severe internal burns after an electrical accident at work. The medical team work urgently to control his pain and save his leg.

### **Episode Five: Children are our Future – Tuesday 12 April at 8.30pm on ABC**

Professor Roy Kimble, Head of the Paediatric unit at Lady Cilento Children's hospital in Brisbane, takes us on a day's rounds. He treats UN refugee 15 year old Masoumeh who sustained serious burns in a fire that killed her father and brother. She dreams of driving a car but Dr Kimble needs to open out her burned hands before she can hold the steering wheel. He also operates on Jada, a three year old who was born with her internal organs outside the abdomen, and on Caleb who was seriously burnt in a fire at home. Caleb has been through 50 hours of operations, and has more surgery to come. We meet Nick and Carly in Canberra who are wrestling with the decision of whether to undergo genetic testing for their second child. Their first child Dash has cystic fibrosis and they have a 25% chance of their next baby inheriting the disease if conceived naturally. In Perth, we meet Adam. At 35 he is an 'old man' in the cystic fibrosis world. With his lung function reduced to 20% he now needs a lung transplant. Louise Baker is a rural generalist in Cowra. A cancer survivor herself, her aim is to practice safe medicine in her rural community helping people stay close to family while receiving treatment. She's been working in Cowra for more than 30 years, and is now delivering the babies of the babies she delivered years ago. And do gentlemen have vasectomies – taking one for the team?

### **Episode Six: The Front Line – GP vs Emergency Dept. – Tuesday 19 April at 8.30pm on ABC**

From seizures to footy falls, to a motor vehicle accident victim who is rushed to Bendigo emergency fighting for life, this episode looks at the front lines of our medical system. Dr Antony Di Dio in Canberra takes us through a day in the life of a suburban GP. He is one of the 30,000 general practitioners in the country and he sees on average 30 patients a day, in line with the national average. A desperate methamphetamine addict presents to emergency for treatment after attempting to commit suicide. What options are there for him when he says he wants help? In the CALD maternity unit of Melbourne's Sunshine Hospital more than 5200 babies are born each year. Some births are routine, others become life-threatening emergencies. New Zealand couple Kahoo and Aaron are expecting their fifth baby. They are very anxious after their last child died soon after birth. And, prostate cancer. It is the most common cancer found in men – 47 Australians will be diagnosed every day and nine will die. In this episode we see Peter undergoing state of the art robotic surgery to remove his prostate.

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## Producer Information

### **Executive Producer: Karen Dewey**

Karen Dewey has a BA Broadcast Journalism (with distinction) from Charles Sturt University.

She worked for 7 years for Network Seven Australia between 2002- 2009. In that time she was Executive Producer of many in-house productions including Medical Emergency (filmed at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne) and Making Babies (creator), an observational documentary series following 12 couples through from pregnancy to birth.

She moved to the Nine Network as Head of Reality and Factual in 2009 where she took responsibility for factual entertainment including RPA (filmed at Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital) and Young Doctors, an observational documentary following resident doctors at the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle.

Karen also has extensive credits in Reality TV including Big Brother, My Restaurant Rules (co-creator), and Celebrity Apprentice, and is the author of two biographies.

### **Series Producer: Elle Gibbons**

Elle Gibbons has 16 years of experience in the television industry. Originally from Zimbabwe, Elle was educated in the United Kingdom where she studied for a BA (Hons) degree in Public Relations with Spanish and Dutch.

Elle has worked in house at Network Seven and the Nine Network, as well as several independent production houses. In 2012, Elle moved to New York City where she worked in Development at ITV Studios America.

Elle has experience in a wide range of genres, from studio based shows, entertainment, lifestyle, reality, observational documentary and historical documentary. In 2006, Elle spent three months in the USA filming an ob.-doc series on obese teenagers attending a weight loss camp. The following year, she moved to Broken Hill to film a documentary series on The Royal Flying Doctors. Most recently, Elle was the Series Producer of Matt Moran's *Paddock to Plate*.