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## **STRETCHED HEALTH SYSTEM IS POWERING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY**

Tonight’s Federal Budget rightly focuses on the nation’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said.

“The Government has done a good job in protecting Australians from the global pandemic, and tonight’s budget continues spending on the COVID-19 health response,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Health has been Australia’s hero throughout COVID. Investing in health not only saves lives, it’s saving the economy. This Budget is clearly designed to help with the economic recovery.”

Dr Khorshid pointed to \$17.7 billion in aged care expenditure and \$2.3 billion in mental health care as supporting much needed improvements for access to health and aged care.

“The Government’s response to the Aged Care Royal Commission will help shore up the failing sector. Moving to mandate nurse-resident ratios is long overdue, but unfortunately we will have longer to wait until these measures are in place,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Additional home care packages will go a long way to clearing the waiting list of older Australians looking for support to stay in their own homes and avoid residential care longer.

“\$365 million committed to expanded primary care support in aged care will also make it easier for older people to see their doctor.

“AMA has been campaigning for increased General Practice care in aged care, and we’ll now need to work on implementation details.

“Mental health investment and suicide prevention is a step in the right direction, with the Government readily agreeing more still needs to be done.

“The AMA has worked closely with the Government on reforms to the Prostheses List to manage the cost of private health insurance. The Budget commits to a reform process, with detail now needing to be confirmed.

“There is also a \$50 million down payment for technology investment to proceed with voluntary patient enrolment in General Practice. Long overdue, voluntary patient enrolment is moving closer to being achieved.

“Yet with these improvements, our public hospitals and General Practices are at present beyond capacity, and this is at a time when we have virtually no flu and no COVID-19 in Australia.

“When our international borders eventually reopen, we will inevitably see the return of influenza and outbreaks of COVID. We’ve also been seeing growing chronic illness.

“Now is the time to be putting the health prevention and health infrastructure in place to build for the post-COVID future. It’s time to fund telehealth permanently beyond its current extension.

“Our public hospitals urgently need an additional injection of federal funding to address capacity issues that are leading to long waiting times in emergency departments and for elective surgery,” Dr Khorshid said.

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11 May 2021

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