

problems that are affecting the major hospitals that are serving most of the country and are so familiar to all of the Australians who live in our cities and major regional areas. There's no doubt that access to healthcare is worse in regional Australia and it's a growing and important problem for regional Australians, but also we need to focus on those hospitals that aren't able to meet their targets at the moment; and what we need to do to help the nurses and doctors who work in those hospitals - all healthcare workers in those hospitals - to achieve and do what they want to do which is to care for Australians.

QUESTION: With your incentive idea, is there a situation where some hospitals just could never ever get to that point and create an imbalance between hospital funding? Should therefore there be some other substitute funding for those hospitals that can't possibly achieve that?

STEVE ROBSON: There are multiple different situations in the country, and every hospital will have a different situation. We need to be flexible in the way we deal with this, but overall, the principles are the same: to recognise the problem, to have a national plan, to increase funding urgently, and to look at long-term funding reform that delivers for Australian patients.

QUESTION: So do we now need something akin to a national body that meets to discuss how we go forward with this? You want 50-50 funding - does that mean bringing all the states, territories, everyone together to create this uniform action?

STEVE ROBSON: National Cabinet is meeting later this week and we hope - in fact, we think that this will be high on the agenda. The state and territory premiers and chief ministers have come around to what the AMA has been saying for a long time, that funding reform is absolutely critical if we're going to move forward for the health of Australians.

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