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## **Lack of investment and innovative thinking creates a ‘sickcare’ system**

Australia’s struggling healthcare system will remain a ‘sickcare’ system until governments see investing in health not as a cost, but as an investment that improves the wellbeing of Australians and pays economic dividends well into the future.

In a report being launched today at the National Press Club by AMA President Professor Steve Robson, the AMA says Australia’s lack of investment in health, particularly in prevention and early intervention, is making health care more costly and challenging.

[Health is the best investment: Shifting from a sickcare system to a healthcare system](#) highlights the growing rate of chronic disease, with almost half the population having one or more chronic diseases and an ageing population that is putting the health care system under increasing pressure.

“Our current approach to investing in and managing health is focused very much on treating poor health outcomes not preventing them, which leads to a sickcare rather than healthcare system,” Professor Robson said.

“We need to reframe our thinking and focus more on how the money we invest in healthcare can improve health outcomes and support economic growth because the evidence is clear — keeping people healthy reduces the costs and burden on our healthcare system and drives economic growth and productivity.

“And while we are wealthy nation, our spend on health as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product is modest when compared to OECD countries like the UK. We have room for investment.”

Professor Robson said the response to COVID-19 had demonstrated that innovative thinking in responding to health issues was possible.

“While COVID-19 laid bare some shortcomings in our health care system it also clearly demonstrated the opportunities for innovation in how we deliver health care and how remarkable things can be achieved when governments, healthcare professionals and the community work together.

“Investments in health to date have resulted in increasing life expectancy by more than 34 years, and that investment has delivered real economic outcomes. But past successes won’t tackle future problems.

“As the AMA analysis uncovered, we currently have hundreds of thousands of people waiting too long for elective surgery, people waiting too long in emergency departments and general practices struggling to survive.

“While it’s true that investment is needed to tackle these issues, we can also improve efficiency, improve access to care and the quality of care. We can return a dividend not just to the quality of Australian lives, but the quality and strength of our society.”

“There is also real potential to reenvision what the health portfolio could be with Treasury’s Measuring What Matters Statement — Australia’s first national framework on wellbeing. The AMA welcomes this new approach that builds on traditional economic indicators to measure what really matters to Australians.”

Read [\*Health is the best investment: Shifting from a sickcare system to a healthcare system\*](#)

Read [AMA's submission to Treasury's Measuring What Matters](#)

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