

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 18 March 2024

System-wide health sector reform on the agenda for medical leaders

The Australian Medical Association and leaders from more than 50 of Australia's medical colleges and associations are coming together in Canberra today to discuss issues in the country's health system and the need for reform.

Ahead of the meeting, the AMA released its pre-budget submissions on public hospitals and general practice, together with a submission proposing changes to address the current workforce crisis.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said Australia had one of the best health systems in the world, but it was now under extraordinary pressure in many areas.

"Today's meeting provides an opportunity for college and association leaders to get together and discuss in detail the issues facing our health system, including in our public hospitals, the private health sector and with our workforce," Professor Robson said.

The immense knowledge and understanding of the health system that these leaders bring to discussions today can play a significant role in guiding future policy and reform to improve access and outcomes for our patients.

"We know that our public hospitals are in logjam, with patients waiting sometimes years just to see a specialist and get on a waiting list for elective surgery; let alone the wait for surgery," Professor Robson said.

"Meanwhile, everyone, including Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler, who will speak at the meeting, acknowledges the health workforce shortages facing the country, with access and lack of planning continuing to be a problem."

Professor Robson said the federal government's significant investments in health over the last year were very welcome but there was more to be done.

"The AMA acknowledge the investments of the past year in primary care and National Cabinet's announcement late last year on hospital funding and reforms to the funding growth cap.

"The acknowledgement that the National Hospital Funding Agreement needs reform, and the funding injection were very welcome, but the next agreement doesn't come into effect until 2025. What we are calling for in our budget submission is an urgent injection of funds to address the issues in our public hospitals today."

Workforce issues will also be discussed at the meeting, with the AMA's budget submission calling for an independent agency to be established that can provide evidence-based solutions to address workforce maldistribution and shortages.

"A National Health Workforce Planning Agency would ensure that Australia has a health workforce with the right skills, in the right locations to meet future community needs and demand," Professor Robson said.

Reform of the private health system is also on the agenda, with the AMA's pre-budget submission calling for an independent Private Health System Authority to oversee the sector and create a platform for reform.

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Read the [AMA's pre-budget submissions on public hospitals, general practice, workforce and private health](#)

Colleges and associations represented at the meeting:

Australian Hand Surgery Society (AHSS)

Australian and New Zealand Society of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgeons (ANZSCTS)

Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA)

Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA)

Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA)

The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD)

Rehabilitation Medicine Society of Australia and New Zealand (RMSANZ)

The National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG)

General Surgeons Australia (GSA)

Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID)

Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)

Neurosurgical Society of Australasia (NSA)

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)

Australian & New Zealand Metabolic and Obesity Surgery Society (ANZMOSS)

Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ)

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ)

Fertility Society of Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ)

Neuromodulation Society of Australia and New Zealand (NSANZ)

Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia & New Zealand (SOMANZ)

Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA)

Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA)

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Australian & New Zealand College of Anaesthetists & Faculty of Pain Medicine (ANZCA)
Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS)
Australasian Integrative Medicine Association (AIMA)
Australasian College of Nutritional & Environmental Medicine (ACNEM)
Colorectal Surgical Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSSANZ)
Australasian College of Aerospace Medicine/Australasian Society of Aerospace Medicine (ASAM) and the Education Committee of the Australasian College of Aerospace Medicine
Australian & New Zealand Society for Geriatric Medicine (ANZSGM)
Spine Society of Australia (SSA)
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
Australian Society of Medical Research (ASMR)
Australian and New Zealand Burn Association (ANZBA)
Australian Society of Ophthalmologists (ASO)
Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery Ltd (ASOHNS)
Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons (RACDS)
Association of Australian Medical Research Institutes
Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM)
Australian Society of Medical Imaging & Radiation Therapy (ASMIRT)
Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA)
Australasian college of Sport and Exercise Physicians (ACSEP)
Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR)
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)
Haematology Society of Australia and New Zealand (HSANZ)
Private Cancer Physicians of Australia (PCPA)
Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA)

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