

# MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 29 October 2024

## Covid-19 report: Time for jurisdictions to back in federal government on CDC

The Australian Medical Association welcomes the federal government's release today of the Covid-19 report and the renewed focus on getting an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) up and running.

The establishment of a CDC was a key proposal in the [AMA's submission to the inquiry](#).

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said the renewed focus and emphasis on the importance of an Australian CDC, together with the announcement of ongoing federal funding, was extremely welcome and it was now time for state and territories to get behind the CDC.

"We've had some concerns about delays in getting the CDC up and running, with the full implementation falling behind schedule," Dr McMullen said.

"We are concerned that jurisdictional differences, unwarranted concerns about the establishment of an independent body and the failure to fully appreciate the benefits of a national approach to tackle future health challenges are stymying the development of the CDC.

"State and territory governments need to get behind the CDC. We need a functional CDC to be reassured that Australia is equipped to tackle the next pandemic.

"Without a fully developed CDC we will be left with a system of state and territory and federal arrangements that are not well integrated or fit-for-purpose. Australia is the only OECD country without a CDC or equivalent and we need it urgently. This can't be a piecemeal exercise."

Dr McMullen said while the report noted Australia did well in its response, a lack of preparedness was evident. In the words of the inquiry report, existing plans were limited and there was no playbook on what actions to take in a pandemic, no regular testing of systems and processes to make clear who would lead parts of the response, and no arrangements on sharing resources and data.

Critically, there was also no discussion on who was best placed to communicate information to Australians in a situation where we did not have all the answers and each community had different backgrounds, health risks and fears.

"The report makes it clear we need to do better to plan for the next pandemic and be better prepared and more transparent and the AMA is in firm agreement with that approach," Dr McMullen said.

"The next pandemic could be just around the corner and without a fully functioning CDC Australia's response would be stymied, with potentially disastrous consequences for Australians. Now is the time to act on what we have learned so we can respond more effectively the next time we have a crisis."

The CDC also needed to include an advisory body with medical practitioners and have its own legislation, Dr McMullen said.

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Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)

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"We learnt the benefit of rapid expert advice during the pandemic and medical practitioners were essential in providing input to the response."

The inquiry has produced an extensive report with detailed guiding recommendations and the AMA will work with governments to ensure that the learnings detailed in this report are not forgotten and Australia is much better prepared for another inevitable pandemic.

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Contact: AMA Media: +61 427 209 753 [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)



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