

MEDIA RELEASE

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Time to listen to experts on Covid-19 recommendations

The [Covid-19 Response Inquiry Report](#) catch-up strategy recommendations highlight the need to put pandemic politics in the past, co-ordinate consistently across all levels of government to invest in a plan to reduce elective surgery backlogs made worse by the pandemic, and fund preventive healthcare.

Australian Medical Association President Dr Danielle McMullen said Australia's public hospital performance had been worsening for years, with patients who need life changing essential surgery left languishing on waiting lists for years if not more, and others finding it hard to even see a specialist to get on a waiting list.

"The AMA has been calling for action on this for years through our [Clear the hospital logjam campaign](#), so we welcome the report's recommendation for a national plan to tackle this issue," Dr McMullen said.

"Last year we welcomed the federal government's announcement of a significant public funding boost to the hospital funding agreement and the decision to replace the 6.5 per cent funding growth cap with a more generous approach.

"This announcement followed tireless AMA advocacy for funding reform. But the new agreement will still need more investment and agreement by all health ministers, and it won't come into effect until mid-next year.

"It's not good enough to have patients who are often in such severe pain they can't work or live their lives normally, waiting years and years to get back on their feet. Something needs to give. It's time for all governments to get behind this recommendation to ensure the healthcare system doesn't deteriorate further."

Dr McMullen said the AMA also welcomed the report's recommendation for additional funding and an implementation strategy to re-engage regional, rural and remote and other high-risk populations in preventive care to help address undiagnosed cases of cancer, diabetes and other illnesses.

"People delayed access to preventive care during COVID, while lockdowns also made it difficult for people to access the care. Just the other day we saw the report out of Victoria University that revealed chronic diseases are escalating in disadvantaged communities across Australia, highlighting the need for investment in preventive health.

"The AMA's [Vision for Australia's Health](#) also highlights this issue and the need for an attitude shift in Australian health policy.

"Our Vision offers a blueprint to transform our health system into one that values prevention as much as treatment. Preventing chronic disease and other health issues significantly reduces the economic burden of healthcare costs and the burden on our health system.

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"We need to look at the big picture. Keeping people out of hospital in the first place should be the goal of all governments."

[Read the Prime Minister's announcement on the release of the Covid-19 Response Inquiry Report](#)

[Read the Covid-19 Response Inquiry Report](#)

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