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**TIME FOR AUSTRALIA TO BE AGILE AND INNOVATIVE IN
 COMBATING DISEASES**

AMA Position Statement on an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC)

The AMA is calling on the Government to make Australia a world leader in science, medicine, and research by establishing an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

Releasing the AMA’s new *Position Statement on an Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC)*, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that Australia must join other developed nations in playing a global role in combating infectious diseases and other potential threats to the health of its people.

Australia is the only country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that does not have an established national authority delivering scientific research and leadership in communicable disease control.

Dr Gannon said that a CDC would send a strong signal that Australia is truly an agile and innovative country.

“Diseases and health threats do not respect borders,” Dr Gannon said.

“There are emerging problems of controlling communicable diseases within Australia’s borders, and a CDC would provide a national focus on current and emerging communicable disease threats.

“The prevention of epidemics, pandemics, and other threats, and the capacity to conduct national responses, must be undertaken by an appropriately funded and staffed CDC.

“The CDC would deliver effective communication of technical and surveillance information, and work with the States and Territories to manage the allocation of public health workforces and resources to tackle emerging and current threats.

“It would coordinate Australia’s vital work with other countries to build international public health capacity through expanding and managing communicable disease surveillance, prevention and control, environmental health, and health awareness and promotion.

“The CDC’s role would be to engage in global health surveillance, health security, epidemiology, and research.”

Dr Gannon said that the current approaches to disease threats rely on disjointed State and Commonwealth structures, informal networks and collaborations, and the goodwill of public health and infectious disease physicians.

“We haven’t yet faced fatal epidemics and infectious disease threats, but we do know that, when we face one, our current capabilities would be severely stretched.

“SARS, MERS, Ebola virus, and Zika virus are examples of the current known threats facing Australia, and these are threats that could result in widespread morbidity and mortality.

“Australia may also face threats from emerging and vector-borne diseases, food and water-borne diseases, respiratory tract infections, vaccine-preventable diseases, and blood borne viruses such as HIV, viral hepatitis, and sexually transmitted diseases (STIs).

“If we are to be a serious force in combating disease in our region, we need a CDC,” Dr Gannon said.

The AMA has written to Health Minister, Sussan Ley, outlining the concerns of the AMA and the medical and health community, and urging the Government to establish a CDC urgently. The May Budget is the perfect opportunity to provide the funding and strategy.

The need for a CDC was supported in the 2013 Standing Committee on Health and Ageing Inquiry, *‘Diseases have no borders: Report on the inquiry into health issues across international borders’*.

The AMA recommends that the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) would:

- initially be staffed using existing Commonwealth Health surveillance personnel, and draw on expertise from across the country and internationally;
- operate under a Governing Council, comprising nominated Commonwealth, State and Territory experts and advisers;
- provide more efficient and focused coordination of research resources to further a national agenda of communicable disease management and control;
- enter into formal relationships with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and other national and international organisations to establish national and regional research priorities and coordinate evidence on emerging disease threats;
- co-ordinate with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) on a shared information agenda on current and emerging disease threats to Australia; and
- advance public health knowledge and workforce development.

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) would undertake the following functions:

- surveillance of communicable diseases, nationally and internationally;
- coordinate Australia’s response to epidemics, pandemics and other threats;
- provide expert advice to Government on infectious disease control management;
- oversee the development and implementation of the Australian Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance, coordinating with State and Territory surveillance initiatives, and linking into international antimicrobial resistance (AMR) response initiatives;
- track global infections, diseases and other threats and provide timely data, analysis and advice on prevention and national security;
- promote healthy and safe behaviours, communities and environment;
- promote and track vaccination levels within the community; and
- build vital relationships with other similar national disease control organisations, within the near and other geographic regions, to ensure the effective co-ordinated management of existing and emerging disease threats affecting the region. Such disease threats may involve diseases such as multi-resistant TB or potential new diseases such as SARS and avian influenza.

The AMA Position Statement on an Australian Centre for Disease Control is at

<https://ama.com.au/position-statement/australian-national-centre-disease-control-cdc-2017>

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