

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ARE KEY TO PUTTING THE
 CARE BACK INTO AGED CARE**

AMA Position Statement on Innovation in Aged Care 2019

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that innovation and enhanced technology must be at the core of any reforms to improve the levels of care, compassion, and coordination in Australia’s aged care sector.

Releasing the AMA’s new *Position Statement on Innovation in Aged Care 2019*, Dr Bartone said that the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety highlighted deficiencies in innovation and technology in the aged care industry, and the AMA Position Statement identifies specific examples where improvements can and should be made.

Dr Bartone said that the Royal Commission’s Interim Report states that they ‘*uncovered an aged care system that is characterised by an absence of innovation and by rigid conformity*’ where ‘*innovation is stymied*’.

“The Royal Commission called for an increased use of technology in aged care, and the AMA supports that call 100 per cent,” Dr Bartone said.

“At a time when Australia has a rapidly growing and ageing population with complex health care needs, technological innovations in aged care are desperately needed.

“Innovation is vital to improve the level of care provided, to deliver consumer-centred care, and enable the sustainability of the aged care system.

“Our Position Statement sets out clearly the role that innovation in technological developments can play in the improvement of care provision for older people in aged care settings.

“Innovation is urgently needed in aged care resourcing, electronic records, medication management, assistive technologies, communication technologies, data collection and research, privacy, and security.

“Older people often move between aged care, primary care, and acute and multiple other care settings. Innovation will improve information sharing between these settings and help avoid the sorts of mishaps that we see happening in aged care, and which were exposed by the Royal Commission.

“The application of digital health to medication management can bring improvements to how medication is prescribed and dispensed.

“Information shared between health care, aged care, and pharmacies will reduce mismanagement of medication and avoid polypharmacy in aged care.”

Dr Bartone said that residential aged care facilities (RACFs) have the responsibility to continuously strive to improve care, including through technological innovation, but this will require significant new and recurrent funding.

“The facilities are settings for increasing complexity of care but they are poorly integrated into the overall health system, with lack of innovation a significant barrier,” Dr Bartone said.

“On top of additional funding and resource allocation, the facilities must be upgraded and upskilled to increase and improve integration and coordination - not only with primary care, but the wider health system in general.

“Innovation will be crucial. Government funding models must enable and support innovation.

“Innovative technologies used in aged care should be co-designed with end users - older people, their families and carers, and health care and aged care providers - to achieve the best possible outcome for older people.

“And there must be greater emphasis on impact evaluations of the application of innovative technologies. The AMA is also concerned with the ethical implications of technology use, data collection, and research in aged care.

“We will continue to advocate for timely policies to protect data privacy and security related to older people accessing aged care services,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA Position Statement on Innovation in Aged Care is available at <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/innovation-aged-care-2019-position-statement>

Background

- Australia is facing an ageing population with more chronic, complex medical conditions than ever before. Starting from 2.7 million people aged over 70 in 2019, it is estimated that over the next 20 years one million people will be added to the over 70 cohort each decade. The 85 years and over cohort is expected to grow to more than one million people by 2039 – up from the current 500,000.
- This is expected to have a huge impact on the future of aged care, in terms of funding and the ability of the system to cope with the growing demand.
- It will be crucial for the Government and the aged care providers to develop timely strategies to develop and implement innovative ideas and policies in aged care. The AMA is leading the way in this regard by outlining what the guiding principles of technological innovation should be.
- The release of this Position Statement coincides with the work of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, which is looking into all aspects of aged care provision, including *‘how best to deliver aged care services in a sustainable way, including through innovative models of care, increased use of technology, and investment in the aged care workforce and capital infrastructure’*.

The transcript of Dr Bartone’s comments to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Canberra hearings on Monday 9 December is available at <https://ama.com.au/media/dr-tony-bartone-aged-care-royal-commission>

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CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753