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**IT IS TIME FOR AUSTRALIA TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE  
 RECURRENT SPENDING ON HEALTH**  
*AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2020-21*

The AMA is calling on the Federal Government to significantly increase recurrent spending on health to properly meet current and future demand for quality care and services in the Australian health system.

Releasing the AMA’s Pre-Budget submission for the 2020-21 Federal Budget, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the AMA wants the Government to lift spending from its current level of 9.3 per cent to a level in line with comparable countries.

“The Australian health system is facing a funding crisis. We are at the tipping point. We cannot hide from the facts anymore,” Dr Bartone said.

“The cornerstone of our health system is general practice.

“The role of primary care, especially general practice, must be built up and properly supported to underpin and coordinate service provision across the whole health system.

“Quality general practice has significantly, progressively, and systematically been under-resourced and underfunded for more than a decade.

“Our public hospitals are underfunded and operating beyond capacity.

“Despite recent reforms, private health insurance still lacks value and affordability ... and the confidence and trust of consumers.

“The aged care sector is in turmoil. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality has uncovered a system riddled with inefficiency and human tragedy. Aged care needs urgent new and ongoing significant investment, and a huge injection of care and compassion.

“Mental health services must be better connected and coordinated, with a heightened role for GPs – and this will require extra and more strategically-targeted funding.

“Australia needs a renewed and reinvigorated focus on preventive health. We need people to be fitter and taking responsibility to make better lifestyle choices to keep themselves healthier and out of hospital. This will need considerable new funding and a coordinated approach from all governments at all levels of government – Federal, State, and local.

“Despite good intentions, the health of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders lags well behind that of non-Indigenous Australians. We can and must do better.

“And more needs to be done in rural health, medical training, and for the health of our doctors.

“All these issues are interconnected. You can’t push or pull on one without consequently affecting the others.

“All these issues are covered in our Pre-Budget submission, and the AMA puts forward strong policies to make real change.

“But, as always, real change – much-needed reform – requires more than good policy. It needs strong funding and targeted investment.

“When it comes to health funding, Australia can no longer afford to fiddle around the edges. Now is the time to lift our spend on health.

“Health Minister Greg Hunt is aware of these challenges and has established a series of reviews and taskforces to come up with solutions and plans for the future of the health system.

“We have seen major reviews into the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and the private health insurance sector, with reforms currently in the implementation phase.

“There is also work currently being undertaken in the areas of primary care, prevention, and mental health.

“And the Aged Care Royal Commission will continue operating for much of this year.

“The outcomes of all these processes will produce policies and reforms that will shape the health system for the years and decades ahead.

“The inescapable facts are that Australia’s population is growing, people are living longer, and the incidence of chronic and complex health conditions is expanding significantly. Keeping people healthy and active will require funding – significant new funding.

“The Australian health system and the Australian people deserve no less. Health is the best investment that governments can make,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2020-21 is available at  
[https://ama.com.au/AMA\\_Budget\\_Submission\\_2020\\_21.pdf](https://ama.com.au/AMA_Budget_Submission_2020_21.pdf)

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