

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**AGED CARE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT NEEDED TO MEET  
GROWING DEMAND**

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said today that urgent planning and investment is needed to meet the health and care needs of an ageing and growing Australian population.

Dr Pesce said that one of the missing pieces in the aged care debate of recent days has been the need for accessible medical care for older Australians in residential aged care facilities.

“Access to medical care for older Australians in residential aged care today is limited,” Dr Pesce said.

“The health needs of older Australians are becoming more complex and numerous, so access to general practice services in particular is crucial.

“The AMA wants access to ongoing medical care to be a specific accreditation standard for aged care providers.

“Older Australians should continue to have access to a range of quality health services, particularly at this time of their lives when they need them most.”

To address the growing medical care needs in aged care, GPs and their practice nurses and geriatricians and other medical specialists need to be supported to provide more regular ongoing care for their older patients in aged care facilities and in the community. The AMA proposes:

- Allowing GPs to use general practice nurses to assist in the delivery of medical care in aged care facilities;
- Accreditation arrangements that more closely monitor and guarantee that aged care residents receive medical care and supervision on an ongoing basis;
- Specific financial support to approved residential aged care providers to allow them to enter into service agreements with medical practitioners to ensure residents can access appropriate medical care;
- MBS items that better reflect the complexity of providing ongoing medical care to residents of aged care facilities;
- A requirement for access to adequately equipped clinical treatment areas that afford patient privacy and information technology to enable access to medical records and to improve medication management;
- Accredited clinical training places for medical students and junior doctors in residential aged care; and
- A sufficient number of registered nurses to monitor, assess and care for residents and liaise with doctors.

Dr Pesce said the AMA's concerns around medical care for older Australians are just part of a growing broader crisis in aged care.

"On top of poor access to medical care, there is a chronic shortage of nurses and carers in the aged care sector," Dr Pesce said.

"Australia needs a long-term strategy and significant investment to prepare for the huge demand on aged care services over the next few decades.

"Planning for Australia's aged care 'boom' must start immediately.

"A long-term aged care strategy that embraces workforce issues, bricks and mortar, information technology, and access to services, especially medical care, is needed.

"Community support programs and transport needs must also be addressed. The elderly need the choice to be supported at home as well as in residential aged care facilities.

"There is a serious shortage of aged care places today, and it will only get worse without immediate action.

"More new aged care facilities must be built now, with ongoing infrastructure planning to stay ahead of demand.

"And more community care places and resources are required for those who need care in the community

"We will have failed as a generation if we don't have a long-term plan for aged care," Dr Pesce said.

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