

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/>



AMA RELEASES PRIORITY HEALTH INVESTMENT PLAN

As part of the National Health Reform Consultation Summit at Canberra Hospital today, the AMA presented the Prime Minister and the Health Minister with a list of health policy priorities for immediate implementation to give Australians a better health system.

The AMA *Priority Investment Plan for Australia’s Health System* identifies seven key areas of the health system where urgent action will make a real difference for people seeking access to quality health services.

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said the AMA Plan is simple, it is immediate, it is affordable, it is practical, and it is common sense.

“We are offering the Government real solutions to real problems,” Dr Pesce said.

“We have looked at the recommendations in the various reports being considered by the Government and we have chosen to make recommendations of our own that will deliver significant benefits to patients and communities.

“This Plan reflects the day to day experiences of doctors and patients in the health system. It responds to the needs of people who use health services every day.

“We need this Plan to improve productivity in the health system, place a greater focus on people and their health needs, and improve the quality and safety of health care.”

The AMA *Priority Investment Plan for Australia’s Health System* sets out seven priority areas for action:

- ***Indigenous Australians are dying too young, the health gap is too wide, and poverty is endemic in the Indigenous population***
 The capacity to provide primary health care to Indigenous communities in rural, remote and urban areas must be significantly improved through expanding the workforce for Indigenous health, and building the health-related capacity of Indigenous communities. [More detail in plan]
- ***When people get sick or injured, they want to see a doctor, usually a GP***
 The Government must strengthen the role of general practice. The AMA recommends infrastructure support to allow existing general practices to evolve and develop into GP Primary Care Centres with GPs leading teams of co-located health professionals. [More detail in plan]
- ***Our public hospitals are being starved of proper resources and there are not enough beds***
 The AMA wants a maximum 85 per cent bed occupancy in public hospitals. More hospital beds are needed and the AMA proposes a national stocktake of public hospital beds and sub-acute beds. The AMA recommends an ongoing monitoring system called ***Bed Watch*** to transparently report on the number of new and existing beds in public hospitals and reductions in emergency department access block over time. [More detail in plan]

- ***Future generations of Australians must have access to highly trained doctors in the right numbers to serve the health needs of all Australian communities***
 As a nation, we should not support substitution and shifting of health care and medical work. There is an urgent need to expand the number of medical training places and training infrastructure in our health system so that we have a training position for every medical school graduate. [More detail in plan]
- ***Give immediate attention to the forgotten people in the system***
 The AMA makes recommendations to improve health services people requiring **sub-acute** care, **mental health** care, care in **rural and remote** Australia, and for people with serious disabilities through a **long term care scheme**. [More detail in plan]
- ***Taking advantage of the e-Health revolution***
 The AMA fully supports the roll-out of e-Health initiatives in order to integrate systems, reduce fragmentation, streamline service delivery, reduce duplication, and improve quality and safety. [More detail in plan]
- ***Ending the ‘Blame Game’***
 It is time to end the ‘blame game’ between the Commonwealth and the States over the funding of our public hospitals. Looking ahead, the AMA believes there should be a single public funder for public hospitals that has total responsibility for fully funding the public hospital system. While the AMA does not support a takeover of the operation of the public hospital system, the AMA model of a single public funder of public hospitals with local governance arrangements would provide transparency and would negate overt cost shifting. [More detail in plan]

Today’s National Health Reform Consultation Summit was co-sponsored by the AMA and was attended by representatives of the Medical Colleges and the leading national medical and health professional associations and organisations.

The AMA *Priority Investment Plan for Australia’s Health System* is available on the AMA website at www.ama.com.au

16 September 2009

CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Peter Jean 02 6270 5464 / 0427 209 753