

17 April 2024

The Hon Mark Butler MP, Australian Minister for Health
Parliament House
Parliament Dr
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Butler

AMA Public Hospital Report Card

I share with you today an advanced copy of the AMA's Public Hospital Report Card to inform your discussions at the health ministers' Meeting on Friday. This year's report card is unequivocal in its findings: our public hospitals need urgent support.

Elective surgery wait times are now the longest on record — almost twice as long as they were 20 years ago. The proportion of category two surgeries being performed within the clinically recommended period has also fallen to the lowest on record.

The AMA is calling on health ministers to agree to an immediate plan to address the elective surgery backlog ahead of the next National Health Reform Agreement. As outlined in our [2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission](#), we have proposed a \$4.12 billion dollar plan to address the elective surgery backlog.

Split evenly between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, the plan would see the Commonwealth provide an advanced payment to support state and territory governments to expand their capacity. The arrangements must be flexible to allow utilisation of capacity in the private sector, and support training and capacity building. Robust and transparent reporting mechanisms must be put in place to ensure patients are benefiting from the investment.

We know this will not be an easy task, but the results from this report card show we cannot afford to wait any longer.

The report card also shows that our public hospitals remain logjammed, ED wait times are worse across all triage categories except for resuscitation, and the proportion of people in all triage categories who completed their emergency presentation in four hours or less is down to 56 per cent, the lowest number since 2011 and a fall of 14 per cent since pre-pandemic levels.

As you finalise the next National Health Reform Agreement, I strongly encourage you to consider arrangements that drive improvements in our hospitals and deliver improved capacity. We need performance-based funding designed to incentivise improved patient outcomes. We need stronger alignment across our health system, including better integration with NDIS and aged care. We need proper investment in primary care to alleviate the burden on our public hospitals while improving the wellbeing of Australians.

The AMA, at both the state/territory and federal level, is committed to supporting reforms aimed at improving the capacity performance of our public hospitals, driving better patient outcomes, and ensuring our doctors, nurses and other hospital staff have the resources and support they need to continue delivering world-leading healthcare. The attached report demonstrates the need for urgent action. We are committed to working with governments around the country to ensure the community can access quality care within clinically appropriate timeframes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Robson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof Stephen Robson
AMA President

cc: The Hon Anthony Albanese
Prime Minister of Australia