

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 WARNINGS COME TRUE – PUBLIC HOSPITAL
 PERFORMANCE GOING BACKWARDS DUE TO LACK OF FUNDING**
*AIHW Report on Elective Surgery Waiting Times and Emergency Department Care 2018-19
 confirms the worst*

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that new information from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) confirms the AMA’s dire warnings during the election campaign that public hospital performance would suffer without significant new funding from the Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments.

Both the AIHW report on Elective Surgery Waiting Times and Emergency Department Care 2018-19, released today, and the 2019 AMA Public Hospital Report Card, released in April, paint a disturbing picture of public hospitals under pressure and patients waiting longer for their care.

“Unfortunately, once again we are seeing our public hospitals go backwards,” Dr Bartone said.

“We are seeing another year of worsening figures, another year of patients waiting longer.

“The AIHW data show that the median wait time for elective surgery in all categories in 2018-19 rose to 41 days, which is the worst performance against this measure since 2001-02.

“In 2018-19, the number of elective surgery admissions per 1000 population in each State and Territory was stagnant in NSW and Victoria, better in the ACT, and worse in all other jurisdictions.

“Nationally, only 63 per cent of urgent emergency presentations were seen within the clinically recommended timeframe of 30 minutes.

“Three in 10 emergency patients waited more than four hours for their treatment to be completed.

“When we launched our Report Card during the election campaign, the AMA warned that, if governments did not act, and act urgently, public hospital performance would worsen – and that has sadly come to pass.

“I made this point again last week at the National Press Club. More people are going to end up waiting in the public system if we don’t act to fix our whole health system, including support for the private sector.

“Yet our governments continue to do the same thing to help our public hospitals – absolutely nothing.

“We need leadership. We need action. We need funding. And we need it now.

“We urgently need significant national investment to give hospitals the capacity to cope with increasing volume.

“When governments underfund and create inadequate hospital capacity, they are making a choice to constrain the supply of public hospital services.

“People will wait longer. While they wait longer, they get sicker. There are more patient complications and even an increased number of deaths.

“Governments need to increase public hospital funding, not just to stem the bleeding, but to allow them to at least to get back to the better performance we've had in the past.

“We must then progress a system of reform and innovation to deal with increased rates of chronic disease and the ageing population through improved primary care,” Dr Bartone said.

The 2019 AMA Public Hospital Report Card is available at <https://ama.com.au/ama-public-hospital-report-card-2019>

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

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