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**NEW MINISTER MUST SET NEW DIRECTION FOR GOVERNMENT
 ON HEALTH POLICY**
AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2017-18

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that the appointment of Greg Hunt as Health Minister provides the Government with the perfect opportunity to change direction on health policy, and to consign any links to the disastrous 2014-15 Health budget to history.

Launching the AMA’s Pre-Budget Submission 2017-18, Dr Gannon said the key for the Government and the Health Minister is to look at all health policies as investments in a healthier and more productive population.

“Health is the best investment that governments can make,” Dr Gannon said.

“The AMA agrees with and supports Budget responsibility. But we also believe that savings must be made in areas that do not directly negatively affect the health and wellbeing of Australian families.

“Health must be seen as an investment, not a cost or a Budget saving.

“There are greater efficiencies to be made in the health system and in the Health budget, but any changes must be undertaken with close consultation with the medical profession, and with close consideration of any impact on patients, especially the most vulnerable – the poor, the elderly, working families with young children, and the chronically ill.

“But the AMA urges caution – and care. The Government must not make long-term cuts for short-term gain. Patients will lose out.

“In this Pre-Budget Submission, the AMA is urging the Government to invest strategically in key areas of health that will deliver great benefits – in economic terms and with health outcomes – over time.

“The first task of the new Minister must be to lift the freeze on Medicare patient rebates, which is harming patients and doctors.

“Primary care and prevention are areas where the Government can and should make greater investment.

“General practice, in particular, is cost-effective and proven to keep people well and away from more expensive hospital care. It was pleasing to hear Minister Hunt use his first health media conference to declare that he wanted to be the Health Minister for GPs.

“The Government must also fulfil its responsibilities – along with the States and Territories – to properly fund our public hospitals.

“So too, the Government must deliver on its commitments to improve the health of Indigenous Australians.

“In this submission, the AMA provides the Government with affordable, targeted, and proven policies that will contribute to a much better Budget bottom line in coming years.

“More importantly, the AMA’s recommendations will deliver a healthier and more productive population to drive further savings into the future.”

The AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2017-18 covers the following key areas:

- Medicare Indexation Freeze;
- Public Hospitals;
- Health Care Home;
- Medicare Reviews;
- Medicare Levy;
- Pathology;
- Private Health Insurance;
- Medical Indemnity – Underpinning Affordable Health Care;
- Medical Care for Palliative Care and Aged Care Patients;
- Indigenous Health;
- Mental Health;
- Medical Workforce and Training;
- Obesity;
- Nutrition;
- Physical Activity;
- Alcohol and Drugs; and
- Climate Change and Health.

The AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2017-18 is at https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/budget-submission/Budget_Submission_2017_2018.pdf

This Submission was lodged with Treasury ahead of the cob Thursday 19 January 2017 deadline.

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