

## **DOCTORS CALL FOR SHORT TERM FIXES WHILE HOSPITALS ARE BUILT**

Doctors have welcomed Queensland Government investment in bricks and mortar but have warned the health system desperately needs short-term fixes to deliver extra hospital beds and cut waiting times.

The Queensland Budget 2019-2020 has promised a \$19.2 billion injection into health services including \$777 million for a capital infrastructure program that will see 700 extra beds roll out across the state over the next four years.

“Redeveloping hospitals and building extra beds is critical in a state where the population is booming,” said Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland Vice President Dr Chris Perry.

“However, infrastructure takes time and Queenslanders need health care today.

“AMA Queensland is calling on the government to forge partnerships with private practices and hospitals to ensure people get the health care they need, when they need it.”

Dr Perry said doctors were disappointed the State Budget did not allocate funding to help local councils re-introduce fluoride in their drinking water.

“Fluoridation is a safe, efficient and affordable public health prevention measure and it defies belief that the State Government has chosen to disregard the Premier, the Health Minister, the Chief Medical Officer and dentists who support this initiative,” he said.

“It lumps Queensland in the dental dark ages.”

Other State Budget initiatives included \$158.6 million over four years to create *Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQ)*, a statutory body that will work across government departments and with doctors, teachers, community groups and others to help reduce obesity and associated chronic diseases.

AMA Queensland has been advocating for several years for a tailored, targeted program to tackle the rising scourge of obesity and its associated illnesses.

“We are very pleased HWQ will get going in the next year but we will need to see how the funds are spent,” Dr Perry said.

“We will keep an eye on where the dollars go, to make sure the money is used effectively at grassroots level, in our communities and not on bureaucracy.”

Dr Perry said this year’s State Budget was a strong start to addressing some of the issues confronting Queensland’s hospital and health system but there is still more to be done.

“Overall, I would grade the health spend in the Budget a strong B and look forward to continuing to work with Queensland Health on improving patient care and doctors’ working conditions across the state,” he said.

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