

MEDIA RELEASE

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Don't fix health problems, prevent them: doctors call for Queensland budget to invest in preventive health

AMA Queensland has called for this year's state budget to boost preventive health measures to save time, money and lives.

AMA Queensland President, Associate Professor Erica Gannon said preventable diseases are placing unsustainable pressure on our hospitals.

"Health is always the biggest slice of the state budget pie, and it will only grow as our population ages and deals with more complex medical conditions," she said.

"Tackling the problems that lead to poorer health outcomes earlier is simply good sense."

Associate Professor Gannon says investing in general practice is the cornerstone of preventive health.

"Increasing Medicare rebates is a federal issue, but there are key things the Queensland government can do in this budget to improve primary care and better integrate it with our public hospitals.

"Statewide expansion of the Patient Care Facilitators initiative, which has been piloted in Ipswich and Logan, would see more patients supported to see their GP within seven days of hospital discharge, promoting safer recovery and preventing readmissions to emergency departments.

"Queensland Health should also establish a senior GP executive role to embed primary care expertise into decision-making."

Associate Professor Gannon said addressing the social determinants of health was critically important in giving all Queenslanders an equal start in life.

"Our 2026-27 budget submission highlights the need to address poverty, housing insecurity, food access, domestic violence, education gaps, gambling and substance abuse, all of which drive preventable illness.

"It also calls for the reinstatement of water fluoridation to give all Queensland kids access to this safe and effective health measure no matter where they live."

Associate Professor Gannon said the pill-testing ban and moves to wind back drug diversion programs must be reversed.

"These are harm-reduction programs that are supported by evidence and save lives."

AMA Queensland has applauded the state government for introducing the FluMist nasal spray vaccine for children aged 2 to 17 in this year's free flu vaccine program.

But the program itself must be made free permanently.

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“We believe it should form part of the National Immunisation Program, but until that is secured, the state government should lock in annual funding,” Associate Professor Gannon said.

“Immunisations like RSV should also be expanded to more adults to reduce the risk of this highly-contagious virus.

“All immunisation programs need to be backed by effective education campaigns.

“There’s a reason why popular things on the internet are described as ‘going viral’, yet ironically people continue to spread misinformation and disinformation about vaccines on social media platforms.

“Governments need to counter the slop with science.”

Sustainability measures that contribute to reducing climate change must also be recognised for their role in preventive health.

“Active travel infrastructure such as bicycle and pedestrian paths return \$5 for every \$1 invested and reduce the risk of chronic disease,” Associate Professor Gannon said.

“We’re calling for 20% of all transport budgets to be allocated to active travel infrastructure, which will pay big dividends in both health improvements and emissions reductions.”

Associate Professor Gannon said chronic disease and mental health risks will be affected by extreme weather events and worsening air quality related to climate change.

“We will see higher incidents of heat-related illness that will particularly affect the very young and our seniors.

“Disaster planning needs to consider the health risks of more destructive storms, cyclones and droughts, while this year’s fuel price shock highlights the broader need for supply chain security.

“Finally, COVID-19 showed us how vulnerable we are to emerging diseases, and pandemic preparedness must be factored into health prevention.”

Associate Professor Gannon said the 2026–27 budget is a critical opportunity to shift Queensland from a crisis-driven system to one that prevents illness, reduces harm and builds long-term resilience.

“Prevention is not optional. It is the most cost-effective, life-saving investment the Queensland Government can make.”