

Australian Medical Association Limited

ABN 37 008 426 793

39 Brisbane Ave, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604

Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499

Website: www.ama.com.au



AMA JOINS CALL FOR CHILD HEALTH TASKFORCE

The AMA has joined with leading Australian health and welfare groups to call for both the current government and the opposition to commit to forming a Child Health Taskforce if successful at this year's federal election.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the Child Health Taskforce would be asked to initially report to the new government within six-months on priority initiatives to improve the social determinants of child health, that is, non-medical factors which influence health outcomes.

Dr Khorshid said these included:

- Poverty
- Housing
- Nutrition, food security and sugary drinks
- Climate change

Dr Khorshid said additionally the AMA, along with ACOSS; the Academy of Child and Adolescent Health; the Murdoch Children's Research Institute; the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians was seeking a commitment from the major parties to fund and implement the recommendations in the recently released [National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) if elected.

The AMA, along with the other organisations have released a joint statement noting the period during the Covid-19 pandemic when income support payments were raised, had been hugely beneficial to children and their families, reducing anxiety and suicides.

Dr Khorshid said the pandemic had also highlighted how crowded and sub-standard housing had contributed to the spread of Covid-19. "We say access to good housing is a fundamental human right and essential for children to be able to grow up in a health and nurturing environment," Dr Khorshid said.

"Our statement also highlights the effect of hunger and poorly nourished children on health and development and school outcomes.

"The AMA, through our [#SicklySweet](#) campaign against excessive sugar in soft drinks has called out the links between sugar and obesity and chronic disease. Poor dental health is also a debilitating outcome of high sugar diets in children.

"Importantly our joint statement makes very clear our children are going to face the full consequence of a heating climate. Australia needs to rapidly transform its energy systems and economy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. We need short, medium and long-term plans."

Dr Khorshid said the statement noted the pandemic response had shown both the benefits of good policy and reinforced the damaging and lasting impacts on children of poverty, poor housing, and social isolation.

“A commitment to equity must underpin fiscal, social and health policy. This particularly applies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children,” Dr Khorshid said.

22 February 2022

CONTACT: Media team M: 0427 209 753 T: 02 6270 5478
E: media@ama.com.au

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>