**Call to the next Parliament: In all areas of policy, please consider health**

**15 May 2019**

‘Whoever is elected to the next Parliament—to Government, Opposition or Crossbenches—please consider health in any decisions that you make’, asks Alison Verhoeven, Chief Executive of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association.

A person’s health and wellbeing extend beyond their immediate presenting concerns—it has its origins in childhood opportunities, parenting, growing up, education, housing, hygiene, food, water, social connections, work–life balance, individual wealth, availability and affordability of services, opportunities to exercise, the feeling of belonging, the environment and many other determinants.

At AHHA we call on future Parliamentarians to embrace this holistic view of health and wellbeing so that as many Australians as possible have lives well-lived.

‘Consider climate change and the social determinants; consider a preventive approach to healthcare; and do not fear devoting resources to them’, Ms Verhoeven said.

‘They are investments that will bring social returns and future savings through reduced future healthcare needs.

‘That’s why throughout this election campaign period AHHA has been urging our political leaders to reinvigorate preventive health measures designed to further reduce smoking, and harmful alcohol and illicit drug consumption.

‘It’s why we have urged that all town water supplies in Australia are fluoridated in the interests of child dental health.

‘It’s why we continue to call for a sugar tax to reduce obesity as well as dental decay in kids.

‘It’s why we have advocated for “joining up” primary and hospital healthcare services with aged care and with care for people with disability.

‘Of course, while we can do much more to reduce future healthcare needs, we will still need the best healthcare system we can have that is fair, equitable and affordable.

‘During this election campaign we have advocated for strategic investment of public funds in healthcare rather than “cash splashes”. And we have applauded evidence-based measures that put patients first and focus on outcomes that matter to them.

‘We have welcomed measures that keep healthcare affordable, particularly dental care and cancer care.

‘We have advocated for keeping healthcare accessible—especially for people living in rural and remote Australia, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

‘We have advocated for attention to vulnerable populations —in particular the mental health needs of young Aboriginal people following the unprecedented rise in number of suicides in this group.

‘In summary, let’s not be afraid of reform.

‘It makes sense to reorientate our healthcare system to focus on patient outcomes and value rather than throughput and vested interests.

‘It makes sense to boost universal healthcare, equity in health, and coordinated and integrated care.

‘It makes sense to support a holistic view of health and wellbeing.

‘Let’s do all this during the term of the next Parliament’, Ms Verhoeven said.

**The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, and community and primary healthcare services. This media release is available** [**online**](https://ahha.asn.au/news/call-next-parliament-all-areas-policy-please-consider-health)**.**

*To follow AHHA commentary throughout the election campaign, visit* [www.ahha.asn.au/election](http://www.ahha.asn.au/election).