

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**AMA PAYS TRIBUTE TO HEALTH MINISTER GREG HUNT**

The AMA wishes the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, well in his future endeavours following his announcement today that he will retire from the House of Representatives at the next election.

The AMA recognises Minister Hunt's commitment and dedication as the Minister for Health and Aged Care over the past five past years. In particular, the AMA acknowledges the Minister's unique ability to bring stakeholders together in order to resolve issues - a skill critical to the health portfolio.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the AMA had worked closely with the Federal Government and in close partnership with Minister Hunt to tackle the great challenges posed to community health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To his credit, Minister Hunt gave the medical profession, through the leadership of the AMA, the opportunity to step up and provide expert medical advice on confronting COVID challenges.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Minister Hunt sought and acted on advice from the AMA and the broader medical profession as all worked together to chart a path through the pandemic.

"The delivery of the vaccination program and the necessary changes to service delivery in primary care and hospitals has often involved a difficult and delicate balancing act, requiring close co-operation between the medical profession and the Minister," Dr Khorshid said.

"Minister Hunt supported the role of GPs at the front line of the COVID vaccination program, utilising the strong relationships and trusted position that GPs have with the vulnerable people at highest risk of contracting the virus. This was on the strong advice of the AMA, and the success of the vaccination program despite the extraordinary pressures on GPs is a testament to the Minister's relationship with the AMA and the broader profession."

The AMA also pays tribute to Minister Hunt for helping to make telehealth a part of the GPs' armoury to supplement visits to practices in person. Telehealth played such a key role during the height of lockdown by reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and the protection of vulnerable patients, as did the introduction of e-Prescribing.

Dr Khorshid said that two important areas of policy reform where Minister Hunt worked closely with the AMA was on stabilizing medical indemnity insurance and on changes to codeine scheduling - despite immense political pressure from lobby groups to abandon this change. Both were the right calls for Australia's health. Minister Hunt also secured, with AMA partnership, the COVID vaccine indemnity scheme.

"Minister Hunt also responded to the AMA's prolonged call to lift the freeze on Medicare rebates, which adversely affected health care affordability for patients, and worked with the AMA to address privacy issues with the My Health Record legislation. The Government is also in its last stages of developing its ten-year primary care strategy and we hope the Minister will be able to deliver a funding package to implement primary care reforms, something we know he is deeply committed to. The Government also started the first steps of important reforms to private health insurance, with the introduction of gold, silver and bronze basic insurance categories.

“There have of course been notable disagreements between the AMA and the Government over the years, but I thank Minister Hunt for the progress he has made in important areas, and thank him for his energy, dedication and time in the portfolio,” Dr Khorshid said.

“His first call when becoming Health Minister was to the AMA, and his ongoing engagement since then – even when we had significant disagreements – has been very much appreciated.

“I wish Greg and his family all the very best for the future.”

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