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FEDERAL BUDGET SETS UP GENUINE ELECTION COMPETITION ON HEALTH POLICY

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said tonight that the Government’s Budget announcements have set up a genuine health policy competition for the upcoming election.

“The Health Minister, Greg Hunt, has listened closely to the AMA and delivered a strong Health Budget, with a particular emphasis on primary care, led by general practice,” Dr Bartone said.

“Australia’s hardworking GPs will be happy to see a commitment of almost \$1 billion to general practice. This includes matching Labor’s promise to bring forward by a year the lifting of the freeze on rebates for a range of Medicare GP items.

“Overall, the Government has delivered a much-needed significant investment to general practice – the driving force of quality primary health care in Australia.”

The GP package includes:

- \$448.5 million to improve continuity of care for patients over 70 with chronic conditions;
- Quality Incentive Payments for general practices (\$201.5 million);
- \$62.2 million for rural generalist training; and
- \$187.2 million for lifting of the freeze on GP items.

The AMA also welcomes:

- Funding for new Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS) medicines;
- Retention of the Aged Care Access Incentive (ACAI); and
- A rural workforce program.

Dr Bartone said there are obvious gaps in mental health, prevention, Indigenous health, pathology, and public hospital funding to improve all hospitals.

“We expect to hear more on these key areas from all parties before the election,” Dr Bartone said.

“Health Minister Hunt has worked closely with the AMA, especially on the primary care element of this Budget.

“Overall, the Government has produced a good start for a quality health policy platform for the election.

“We look forward to the Opposition making health a real contest when they roll out all their policies.”

Dr Bartone said there is still unfinished business with the Private Health Insurance reforms as they are implemented from this month, and with the ongoing work of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review, which must return any savings to new and improved MBS items.

The AMA Pre-Budget Submission 2019-20 is available at

https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/budget-submission/AMA_Budget_Submission_2019_20.pdf

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