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LABOR’S MEDICARE CANCER PLAN WILL BRING COMFORT AND RELIEF TO CANCER PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the AMA welcomes the decision by Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Labor to make a significant investment to ease the cancer experience of Australian patients and their families.

Dr Bartone said that the Opposition has backed its broad policy with significant funding to cover consultations, scans, tests, and medication.

“It is a sad reality that every Australian is touched by the scourge of cancer, directly or indirectly, through their own experience or that of a family member, neighbour, colleague, workmate, or loved one,” Dr Bartone said.

“Easing the financial burden of many cancer patients and families will help them focus on the primary challenge of treatment and recovery.”

Dr Bartone said that the AMA will consult with Shadow Health Minister, Catherine King, on the finer details of the policy and exactly how they affect patients and their doctors.

“There are key elements of this policy that accord with AMA policy,” Dr Bartone said.

“The AMA has for many years lobbied successive governments that Medicare patient rebates do not reflect the true cost of providing high quality care, and this has certainly been the case with cancer consults, treatments, scans, and tests. The Labor plan fundamentally acknowledges this.

“We support the evidence-based listing of life-saving and life-improving medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for cancer patients and other conditions. Both the Government and Opposition support the PBS.

“And the AMA has called, as recently as in our Budget submission 2019, for all MRI machines to be eligible for Medicare rebates, if they meet appropriate standards,” Dr Bartone said.

The *AMA Position Statement on Diagnostic Imaging 2018* states that: ‘All MRI machines that meet standards set by RANZCR, and are staffed by radiologists and radiographers that meet the RANZCR’s MRI accreditation standards, should be eligible for Medicare rebates’.

Dr Bartone said that it is pleasing that Labor had committed significant investment to an important segment of the health system, and the AMA looks forward to more announcements regarding the broader health system throughout the election campaign.

“This is a great start, but we need to take a much more universal, whole-of-health view of the system that also looks at primary care, mental health, Indigenous health, aged care, prevention, and other neglected parts of the system,” Dr Bartone said.

The AMA will soon release its policy wish list – *Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election*.

5 April 2019

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