



MEDIA RELEASE

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HEALTH: FRONT AND CENTRE

Health is firmly on the election agenda with both sides of parliament announcing policies.

AMA Tasmania welcomes the proposed budget investment in primary health care, particularly the long overdue lifting of the freeze on the MBS. GP's have had to bear the increasing cost of delivering their services for far too long with the result that there has been less bulk billing and more substantial gap payments having to be paid by patients.

Increased funding in chronic disease management, and the adding of additional drugs to the PBS, increased investment in mental health services, particularly the promise of an eating disorder clinic for Tasmania, are welcomed. However, AMA would have liked to have seen a more significant commitment for investment in our public hospitals to ease the pressure on hospital beds.

Disappointingly, there has been no commitment from either party for the next stages of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment. Without Federal Government support, the completion of the new RHH is decades away, which is simply not good enough.

We also welcome the focus on cancer services and the lifting of the financial burden of sick patients; however, more detail is needed as to how that will impact GP's services and bulk billing.

Equally, AMA Tasmania welcomes the election promises being made by Federal Labor, notably the \$2.8b Better Hospital's Fund, including the increased funding to hospitals. Our hospital staff are stressed, and more funding is required to recruit more staff and open more beds. However, AMA Tasmania as mentioned is disappointed financing for the next stages of the redevelopment of the RHH was not explicitly mentioned in Bill Shorten's Budget Reply speech, and we would hope funding would be found through the Hospital Infrastructure Fund they announced last night.

While Labor has said that they will lift the freeze on the Medicare rebate, there still needs to be recognition of the cost burden on all GPs and non-bulk billed patients who have borne the cost of the rising gap between Medicare's scheduled fee and the actual cost of delivering GP services. GP's need more than indexation restored. They need the MBS payments to be lifted to close the gap for patients between the Medicare rebate and the GP's fee.

The AMA believes more needs to be done to close the health gap experienced by disadvantaged members of our community. There's an opportunity for both sides of politics to commit to funding evidence-based programs that will address intergenerational health disparities by giving children the healthiest start to life and the best chance for lifelong health literacy by ensuring children achieve optimal school readiness by age five.

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