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AMA CALLS FOR BIG INVESTMENT ACROSS THE HEALTH SYSTEM

AMA Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election

The AMA today released *Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election* - a summary of the major health issues that the AMA considers must be addressed by the major parties during the election campaign and into the next term of Government, whichever party wins.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that health policy will be a vital factor in the outcome of the 2019 Federal Election, which is expected to be soon called for May.

“Health policy influences votes at every election, and doctors are very good judges of health policy,” Dr Bartone said.

“Doctors witness the best and worst of health policy every minute of every day across the country.

“We witness it in public hospitals, private hospitals, in general practice, in private specialist practice, in aged care facilities, mental health, in people’s homes, in emergency situations, in medical research, in academia. In all settings.

“We witness it in the CBDs of our major cities, in the inner and outer suburbs, in the large regional centres, in towns and villages, in rural and regional outposts, in the outback, and in remote Indigenous communities. In all locations.

“We witness it at all stages of life – from pregnancy to childbirth to infancy to teens to adult years to aged care and end of life.

“Doctors are uniquely placed to comment on health policy. We have the daily lived experience to know what works and what doesn’t work. Our patients tell us what is good and bad about their patient journey.

“Our *Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election* document sets out what the AMA and the medical profession believe needs to be done to keep the Australian health system up there as one of the best in the world.

“And it is one of the best in the world, if not the best. But it will take strong leadership, hard work, good policy with long-term strategic vision, and significant well-targeted funding to keep it working efficiently to meet growing community demand.

“The health system has many parts, and they are all linked. Governments cannot concentrate on a few, and neglect the others. Otherwise, patients will be the ultimate losers. Whole patient care cannot be done in silos, in parts, or in isolation.

“The priorities remain the pillars of the health system –primary care led by general practice, public hospitals, prevention, and the private health system, which includes private hospitals and private health insurance – with the strong underpinning of Medicare.

“But other sectors are gaining in prominence and need, most notably aged care and mental health.

“We have seen some early policy announcements in the Budget and the Budget Reply. The Government announced a very welcome and much-needed significant investment in primary care, with the focus rightly on general practice.

“The Opposition responded with a considerable Medicare Cancer Plan, which will ease the financial pressure on cancer patients and their families.

“These are both worthy contributions to the health policy contest we need to see in this election campaign, but there is so much more to do across the health system.

“Primary health care, especially general practice, must be at the top of the list of the health policy agendas of the major parties at this election.

“General practice touches all parts of the health system. It is the glue that holds everything together.

“The AMA will urge the major parties to adopt the policies and recommendations detailed in this document. For our patients. For our communities.

“Health is the best investment that any government can make,” Dr Bartone said.

AMA *Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election* covers:

- General Practice and primary care;
- Public hospitals;
- A futureproofed Medicare;
- Medical care for older Australians;
- Private health;
- Diagnostic imaging;
- Pathology;
- Task substitution;
- Mental health;
- Asylum seeker and refugee health;
- Climate change and health;
- Indigenous health;
- Prevention;
- Obesity;
- Alcohol;
- Tobacco;
- Addiction;
- Immunisation;
- Rural health;
- Medical workforce; and
- Supporting GP training.

Key Health Issues for the 2019 Federal Election is available at <https://ama.com.au/article/key-health-issues-2019-federal-election>

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