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HEALTH POLICY WILL BE AT THE HEART OF NEXT ELECTION

With Bill Shorten's Budget reply speech last night, the Opposition has ensured that health policy will be at the heart of the next election, as it should be.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that Labor's pledge of \$2.8 billion in new funding for more public hospital beds and shorter surgery wait times responds directly to the series of AMA Public Hospital Report Cards and our comments on public hospital funding on Budget night.

"Public hospital funding is increasing, but it must increase faster and more significantly to meet growing community demand, and allow our public hospitals to reach the capacity to allow doctors and other health professionals to do their important work of saving lives and improving quality of life at optimum levels," Dr Gannon said.

"It is vital that there is teamwork and cooperation between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories to ensure hospital funding stays at appropriate levels into the long term."

Dr Gannon said that Labor's promised \$80 million investment in MRI machines and licences will provide more Australians with access to important radiology services, including in regional and outer suburban areas where these services are in short supply.

"The Budget and the Budget reply have put a strong public focus on health policy that affects Australians at all stages of life," Dr Gannon said.

"We have seen strong policies from the Government and the Opposition on aged care, mental health, rural health, medical training, public hospitals, diagnostic imaging, and the PBS.

"Big decisions on private health and the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) are still to come before the next election.

"Poll after poll shows that the voting intentions of many Australian are swayed by health policy.

"Health policy was a key factor at the last election. It will be a key factor at the next election.

"Health is the best investment that any government can make," Dr Gannon said.

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