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Transcript: AMA President Dr Michael Gannon, ABC Radio AM, 15 July 2016

Subjects: Federal Election, Medicare

KIM LANDERS: Despite the potency of Labor's Medicare campaign, the head of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) is suggesting the Government revisit the concept of a GP co-payment.

Michael Gannon's flagged the idea while launching a stinging critique of the Coalition's election strategy. He's accused the Government of not wanting to talk about health during the campaign and silencing the Minister, Sussan Ley. Political reporter, Eliza Borrello, has the story.

MICHAEL GANNON: The Coalition had the scare of their life in the election campaign.

ELIZA BORRELLO: Michael Gannon's only been at the helm of the AMA for a month and a half but the straight-talking West Australian obstetrician is certainly making his presence known.

MICHAEL GANNON: It seemed to me from afar that the Coalition didn't want to talk about health in the campaign and that they had silenced Minister Ley, I think that's unfortunate.

ELIZA BORRELLO: Dr Gannon called out Labor's claim that the Government planned to privatise Medicare as a scare long before Coalition strategists realised its potency.

MICHAEL GANNON: The reason it took hold was because there were numerous elements of their health policy going back a couple of years that people were really scared about.

ELIZA BORRELLO: He does, however, support Labor's push to unfreeze the Medicare rebate - the money the Government pays GPs for bulk billing patients. Dr Gannon's spoken to the Prime Minister since the election and is confident he understands the AMA's concerns.

MICHAEL GANNON: I think that in an ideal world he would unravel the freeze tomorrow. What we have seen in the past, going back to the 2014 budget, was a desire by the Coalition to introduce a co-payment to try and work out ways that those who can afford it can contribute more to the cost of their healthcare.

Now the reason that proposal failed so badly is because it didn't give the opportunity for individual GPs to make a judgement, knowing their patients well, who can and can't afford even a modest amount of money.

ELIZA BORRELLO: Your predecessor Brian Owler emphatically ruled out the \$7 co-payment idea. Are you saying that you would revisit that?

MICHAEL GANNON: I'm happy that anything can be on the table, but we cannot have policy that doesn't protect the most vulnerable in the community.

ELIZA BORRELLO: A spokesman for the Health Minister, Sussan Ley, says the Government has no intention of pursuing a co-payment - a position the Shadow Minister Catherine King strongly supports.

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