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**Transcript:** AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, Sky News Live, *Newsday with Ashleigh Gillon*, Wednesday, 12 May 2021

**Subject:** Federal Budget, aged care, hotel quarantine, general practice, public hospital funding

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**ASHLEIGH GILLON:** Joining us live now is the AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid. Dr Khorshid, appreciate your time. Plenty of spending in your space. Big ticket items include the almost \$18 billion towards aged care expenditure, \$2.3 billion in mental health care. On aged care first, we've seen some reaction this morning from those within the sector, and seeming to suggest that the extra \$10 a day per resident simply doesn't go far enough. It's certainly not far enough, they're saying, to ensure that recommended 200 minutes of carer face time per resident each day. Do you have similar concerns?

**OMAR KHORSHID:** Afternoon Ash. We're very pleased to see the Government investing in aged care. And although we certainly haven't got everything we wanted, we have to acknowledge the extraordinary amount of money they've put forward. The \$10 a day is, to our understanding, the recommendation of the Royal Commission and it covers the basic care of people in residential aged care facilities. The specific funding for increased nursing contact, which unfortunately is delayed back to 2024, is certainly separate to that \$10 a day. And it's absolutely critical to change this sector, that that is the thing that will make the biggest difference in aged care. And although we're going to have to wait a little while before we get it, it's pleasing that the Government has responded to that recommendation from the Royal Commission.

**ASHLEIGH GILLON:** So, for people watching this interview at home, wondering what does this mean for my family member, I mean, how quickly do you expect those additional homecare packages, for example, will start to clear that huge waitlist of older people who are really needing help now?

**OMAR KHORSHID:** I think we have to acknowledge that some of this stuff will take time, partly because any expansion means you need to find workforce. You need to put in systems and you need to be able to do more than just spend the money. So, it will take time and I think Australians who are currently on that waiting list may not see relief immediately, but at the end of the day, an extra 80,000 homecare packages is a very large number and it will go an awfully long way to addressing the critical shortage of spending there's been in this area for the last few years.

**ASHLEIGH GILLON:** [Audio skip] some of the billions of dollars set aside as a potential election war chest will be directed towards those [quarantine] facilities in the coming months. From the sound of it, it sounds like the opposition might have more to say on that front in their Budget reply.

**OMAR KHORSHID:** We're certainly hoping that in the lead-up to the next federal election there'll be an opportunity for the Government to take some of the missed opportunities from this Budget, and to list those. There's no significant vision for general practice and primary care in this Budget. A missed opportunity there. Certainly, we would like to see a sort of specific funding towards Commonwealth-run facilities in each State and Territory for the purpose of quarantine, so that we're not still experiencing these disruptive outbreaks that are happening every few weeks within our quarantine system.

But I think the biggest challenge going forward is how we get Australia ready for opening our borders. And that's remembering we have a public hospital system right now that is bursting at the seams, it is overrun with really sick Australians who can't get in the front door. They're ramped in ambulances outside hospitals. And this is in the setting of no flu - we have record low numbers of flu patients. There's no COVID. Now, once we open those borders, both those viruses will be coming into Australia,

and even with a vaccinated population, we have to be ready, and that's certainly going to be the AMA's focus on advocacy with the Government following this Budget.

**ASHLEIGH GILLON:** Because Dr Khorshid, the Government is telling us our hotel quarantine system is 99.9 per cent effective, that it is a system that is broadly working despite the recent outbreaks you just alluded to. Are you suggesting that really is just spin when you consider how regularly these outbreaks are happening? It appears we're looking at another one right now stemming from hotel quarantine. This time, likely from a South Australian hotel.

**OMAR KHORSHID:** That's right. So, even what we think are relatively high performing quarantine facilities are still failing. And we need to take a different approach. And I think the Government has acknowledged that with its ban on travel from India. [Audio skip] Territory governments right now tomorrow. But also, setting ourselves up for the future. And in our mind, quarantine is with us for the foreseeable future. We can't see a situation where there is no need for quarantine. even as we start to open up the borders, even with a vaccinated community. We're still going to need some form of border controls, particularly with people arriving, we believe, from high-risk places or where there's new variants of these viruses.

Not to mention, of course, the next pandemic. So, it's a no-brainer in our view and it's a view echoed we know by a number of State Governments that now is the time to be investing in those facilities so they're ready for the future.

**ASHLEIGH GILLON:** Yeah, Labor certainly pointing that out today as a big missed opportunity of this budget. Dr Omar Khorshid, appreciate you joining us. Thank you.

**OMAR KHORSHID:** Thanks Ash.

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