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END THE LOGJAM IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS, AMA URGES
AMA to make public hospital funding an election issue with new campaign

The AMA has launched a new public hospitals campaign, [Clear the hospital logjam](#), to reform the way public hospitals are funded and make hospitals a vote-changing federal election issue.

The campaign will highlight the impact of hospital logjams around the country, hear disturbing testimony from frontline ED doctors, and encourage Australians to vote for their public hospital at the federal election. It’s the first time the AMA has elevated public hospital funding to a federal election campaign.

Clear the hospital logjam explains how ambulance ramping, emergency waiting times and delays in elective surgery are all part of a cycle of underfunding and poor planning that is putting pressure on hospitals across the nation and which are buckling under the extra strain of the pandemic.

AMA [analysis](#) shows a lack of funding to expand capacity and improve performance in hospitals is the root cause of widespread ambulance ramping and bed block – the hospital logjam – around the country and needs to be fixed once and for all.

“The long-standing public hospital funding failure is so serious we can no longer allow this issue to be punted between state and federal governments, it’s a national issue. Australians are in danger of losing their access to universal healthcare and that’s a tragedy we can’t allow,” AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said.

“The only way we will ever resolve this problem is to fundamentally change the way governments fund public hospitals and it needs to happen now,” Dr Khorshid said.

The AMA campaign invites Australians to share their own experiences of logjams in our public hospitals, whether in emergency departments, waiting for essential surgery, or a specialist appointment.

In coming weeks, ‘town hall’ events in every state and territory will ventilate the experiences, problems, and performance of local public hospitals, energising voters in their electorates.

“We know that on the ground our hospitals are hurting – they were under pressure even before the pandemic. Supporting hospitals is critical along with our hard-working GPs who can prevent disease and keep Australians well and out of hospital in the first place,” Dr Khorshid said.

“This campaign is focused on addressing the root causes of these logjams, and as a first step we are going to amplify the voice of those exhausted staff and frustrated patients, so all our leaders can hear.

“Australians are sick of state and federal politicians blaming each other for inadequate hospital funding and so we are encouraging all Australians to elect candidates who understand the current funding arrangements are broken, and who are willing to go to Canberra to change them.”

The AMA also released the hospital chapter of its [Pre-Budget Submission](#) today, providing the figure of \$20.5 billion across four years to create a more equitable 50-50 funding share between the Commonwealth and states and territories, and to remove the existing 6.5% cap on funding growth. It also calls for additional partnership hospital funding to be provided to improve performance, expand capacity, and address avoidable admissions.

“Our pre-campaign focus groups show Australians were shocked to find hospital funding is not already designed to meet the needs of the community. Now is the time for a national partnership approach to fund hospitals to expanded capacity, reward performance, and facilitate evaluation and improvement,” Dr Khorshid said.

“To aid both parties the AMA recently released a detailed analysis of Australia’s hospital system, [Public hospitals: Cycle of crisis](#). We know the size and scale of the problem, and how to fix it. We just need the incoming government, whichever that is, to act.

“COVID-19 has exposed the fault-lines in our hospital system, and Australians have never been more aware of its critical role in underpinning our nation’s health.

“Public hospitals should be a vote-changer and we hope Australians will take that opportunity at the election.

"I've raised public hospital funding with both major parties and while nothing has been committed yet, we'll continue discussions.

“We want to see a pledge before election day from both sides that a Commonwealth government of either persuasion will commit to end the logjam in public hospitals, through better targeted, more equitable funding with states and territories to fix public hospitals,” Dr Khorshid said."

Share your logjam story on the new [campaign website](#) or email hospitals@ama.com.au. More on AMA’s hospital funding reform solution is [here](#).

Further campaign action will be rolled out over the course of the *Clear the hospital logjam* campaign.

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