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**Subject: Opening Speech: Launch of AMA Campaign *Clear the Hospital Logjam***

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OMAR KHORSHID:

Good morning everyone. I'm standing here today with the West Australian President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Mark Duncan-Smith, to officially launch the AMA's public hospital election campaign. It's called *Clear the Hospital Logjam*. And you might ask: what's a hospital logjam? A hospital logjam is the reality that faces our public hospitals, and the Australians who need to use those hospitals, every day. It gives you a sense that the hospitals are full all the time. That we can't get people out the backdoor of the hospital, because of problems in aged care and NDIS, problems with looking after people in the community. There's a lack of capacity in the hospitals themselves due to a lack of investment by our state governments, and a lack of money from our Federal Government in the actual hospital capacity. And that means that you can't get in the front door. Whether you're a patient who needs elective surgery, who is languishing on a waiting list, or you're somebody who presents to the emergency department with a serious illness, or even more worryingly, if you are so sick that you call an ambulance and the ambulance is parked outside the hospital for hours, that is what we mean by a hospital logjam.

Now, our campaign is unashamedly a political campaign. We are seeking to change the opinions of our major political parties by getting grass root support from everyday Australians for there to be a significant investment, a capacity to understand the problems in our hospital system, on the part of the political parties -- and a commitment from them to fixing this problem. Now, public hospitals are just the focal point of this campaign but they're symptomatic of a much bigger problem in the health system, with a lack of investment in prevention in keeping Australians healthy. A lack of investment for decades in general practice and primary care, so the patients living with chronic disease, Australians - many, many Australians - living with chronic diseases can be managed safely and appropriately in the community. And, of course, that means more demand on our public hospitals. So, what we're calling for is for more money to go into the public hospital system, for there to be a new funding formula that actually addresses the capacity needs of the public hospital system but also looks at the broader system. It looks at primary care, it looks at aged care, it looks at prevention, it looks at the National Disability Insurance Scheme -- to make sure that all those critical parts of the system are working together so that the sickest Australians can receive the care that they need, when they need it.

Now this campaign is a grassroots campaign. So, we're asking Australians who've had experiences in our public hospital sector to share their experiences with us so that we can share them with the politicians who'll be seeking our votes at the upcoming election. We are calling for all Australians to think about their health. Think about the fact that they may need a public hospital one day. They may need elective surgery. They may need to turn up to the

emergency department, or possibly in the back of an ambulance for urgent care. And your vote matters. If you vote for a party that is committed to our public hospital system, we are likely to get some action and we are likely to see that decades of underinvestment in this part of the health care system and our broader health care system are actually addressed after this election.

COVID-19 has really focussed our minds on our health. It's shown that Australians are willing to make some sacrifices to keep ourselves healthy, and to keep other Australians - more vulnerable Australians - healthy. It's shown the cracks in our public hospital system, the cracks in our primary care system, and we must act now to address those issues because the demand going forwards is only going to get greater. We have, as we know, an ageing population. We have more Australians living with chronic disease, which means they need more health care and more hospital care. And of course, we've got the pandemic, which has deferred elective surgery for tens of thousands of Australians, which has led to Australians not seeking care when they should have from their GP, or from their specialist, or from their hospital. And we will be playing catch up for many years due to the impact of the pandemic. And that's not even considering long COVID, which could of course also put enormous demands on our health care system.

So, it is critical that health care and in particular our hospital system is taken seriously at this election. We're asking Australians to vote on health care and to share with the AMA their experiences as we go forward in this campaign, and as we point the finger at any political party, any major party, that aspires to government that doesn't have a sound and future proof healthcare system at the core of its policy platform. Now, before I take questions, I'll just hand over to my colleague to describe the West Australian Public Health hospital system.

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CONTACT: 02 6270 5478 0427 209 753 [media@ama.com.au](mailto:media@ama.com.au)

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