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**PRIMARY HEALTH CARE WILL FAIL AUSTRALIANS
 IF NOT FUNDED PROPERLY SAYS AMA**

The AMA has said if GP funding is not addressed a return of widespread GP shortages across Australia is inevitable.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the recommendations of a [Senate report into primary health care](#) recently released made clear current Medicare funding for general practice services is inadequate.

Dr Khorshid said the interim report from the Community Affairs References Committee called for across the board increases in funding for general practice.

“The committee has been inquiring into the provision of general practitioner and related primary health services to metropolitan, rural, and regional Australians and has validated our continual call for a new fairer funding model and structure of GP services, to benefit both GPs and Australians living outside metropolitan areas.

“We welcome the acknowledgement in the report that current Medicare funding for general practice services in Australia is inadequate and needs to be significantly improved. General practice has had to deal with inadequate indexation of Medicare rebates since Medicare was introduced and patient rebate freezes under both major parties.

“The simple reality is the rate of growth in a patient’s Medicare rebate is less than inflation and staff wages growth. In real terms, general practice is being asked to do more with less and this is impacting practice viability and access to services for patients.”

Dr Omar Khorshid said fewer doctors were choosing to enter the GP training program, fueled by a growing view that governments and Medicare simply did not value the significant skills and expertise of GPs.

“This is the product of deliberate Government policy over many years that has taken general practice for granted,” he said.

“The AMA had hoped the Commonwealth’s attitude to general practice would change, however, the long-awaited Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan released in last week’s Budget was simply more of the same. It delivered a welcome vision for general practice, but no funding to deliver that vision.

“The response of the Opposition has been equally as disappointing. Just weeks out from an election it is yet to release any meaningful GP policy and relying on voters to believe that it will be better.”

Dr Khorshid said the interim report also made other important recommendations in support of strengthening general practice. He said this included expanding opportunities for young doctors in training to experience general practice, while also highlighting the need for employment reform for GPs in training who have inferior employment conditions when compared to their hospital-based colleagues.

Dr Khorshid said in the lead up to this year's Budget, the AMA released its plan to support general practice, calling for extra funding to:

- Introduce medical homes to bolster coordinated, patient centred care.
- Increase the time available to patients to spend with their GP to address complex healthcare concerns.
- Encourage the provision of more GP services into after-hours.
- Expand the number of nurse and allied health services available in general practices.
- Bolster the GP care provided to aged care residents.
- Create a wound consumables scheme, saving patients time and money
- Evolve our GP training program to make general practice more appealing to the next generation of doctors.

“The AMA has put forward sensible and costed ideas that would support improved access to care through general practice and put general practice on a much more sustainable footing as the population ages and people's care needs become more complex.

“The major parties need to do much better as the specialty is being left to struggle with a growing workload as the community ages and patients' health care needs become more complex,” Dr Khorshid said.

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