

**Australian Medical Association Limited****ABN 37 008 426 793**

Level 1, 39 Brisbane Avenue, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604  
Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499  
Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**Transcript:** AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid and AMA (NSW) President Dr Danielle McMullen:  
At the Tree of Truth in Sydney, Friday 29 April 2022.

**Subject:** “Crickets” from PM Scott Morrison and Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese on urgent hospital and health reforms.

---

**OMAR KHORSHID:** Thank you for coming today. I'm joined today by the New South Wales President of the AMA, Dr Danielle McMullen, and we've just been meeting with the New South Wales Health Minister Brad Hazzard to talk about the state of the health system here in New South Wales and the need for reform of our health system to be discussed in this election campaign.

I'm here today to point the finger directly at the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader for their lack of leadership, for their lack of vision so far when it comes to health in this election campaign.

We have heard crickets from both parties about the substantial reform needed to make our health system fit for purpose into the future, and in particular to address the public hospital crisis, the ambulance ramping that we're seeing throughout the country and the fact that Australians are dying at home and in the back of ambulances when they should be in a hospital simply because our hospitals are jammed up from the back door through to the front door.

Now, we've pointed this out very loudly and very clearly. We've spoken to both sides, and neither side, as yet, has had anything meaningful to say on health. Neither side has a vision to address our lack of primary care, the need for reform on healthcare in the community, and neither side has any solution for our public hospital crisis.

The reality is that Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese are accepting our public hospital crisis by not talking about it in this election campaign. They're saying it's okay that Australians can't access the care that they need when they need it. And from the point of view of doctors, from the point of view I think of everyone in the community, that is simply not good enough.

So we're really hoping and expecting to hear much more from both sides in the second half of this election campaign about what they're actually going to do to address these critical areas of health. Australians value their health.

We've seen in COVID the critical importance of a functioning health system to keep Australia healthy and to keep our economy going. And simply sitting back and ignoring the health crisis during an election campaign is unacceptable. And that needs to be pointed out very clearly to the major parties in this election campaign.

I'm just going to hand over to my New South Wales colleague to have a bit of a chat about primary care and the need for reform there, and also about the situation here in New South Wales.

**DANIELLE MCMULLEN:** Thank you. Look, it's fantastic to be joined finally by our Federal AMA President after a difficult few years, thanks to the COVID pandemic, being stuck across the country. And yet health care leaders have been managing to work together to drive such important public health measures across the country and to manage COVID 19.

What we need is greater leadership from our political leaders to carry that healthcare message forward and to make sure that all Australians have access to the care they need, and that our health system is

well supported. As a GP, obviously, I see the importance of a strong healthcare system every day and have throughout my career, but particularly the past couple of years, the importance to our patients of having a strong healthcare system.

At the moment, the underfunding of both primary care and of our hospital system means that day after day I am faced with patients who I can't get in to their more specialist care that they need, or that I can't fit in for an appointment as soon as they need. And our most vulnerable patients are waiting longer than they should for appropriate medical care. We need to modernise our funding of Medicare.

Our current system is not fit for purpose to provide high quality general practise care, and for us to be able to do the job that so many Australians need. So we are calling on government to talk about health, to make it an election priority, and to ensure that we have strong funding of our public hospital system, but also of our primary care system, so that we can all continue to provide not just COVID care, but all of that non-COVID care chronic disease management that's been underdone for the past few years.

**OMAR KHORSHID:** I'll just give you a couple more comments. The states and territories all agree with the AMA that we need to do something different on hospital funding. They have asked the Federal Government to commit to 50-50 funding of the health system. That would be a \$20 billion commitment over four years and removing the artificial cap that the Commonwealth actually puts on hospital activity. There's a cap of 6.5 per cent per year, which coming out of COVID is just not going to work.

We are at one with all the state and territory governments who, of course, have the responsibility of actually running their systems but don't have the ability to raise the tax that they need to actually fund the system properly. That's where the Commonwealth comes in. It is the Commonwealth's responsibility to join with the states, to work together, and together with, of course, all the healthcare workers, the doctors, the nurses, the administrators that run the systems to make sure that all Australians can access the healthcare that they need when they need it.

It's the ambulance ramping, the lack of access to emergency departments, elective surgery waiting lists where almost a million Australians are currently waiting for surgery and almost 200,000 more than before COVID. These are all statistics, but behind each of those statistics is a real Australian whose health is suffering, whose quality of life is suffering. And we have the opportunity now to do something about it. And if we do nothing, if we hear nothing from these parties during this election campaign, it will be another electoral cycle, another three years without the investments that are needed to actually make a difference and to set our system up to be sustainable into the future so that Australians can remain the most healthy people in the world.

---

29 April 2022

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

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: [http://twitter.com/ama\\_media](http://twitter.com/ama_media)

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>

---