

MEDIA RELEASE

SAT 12 OCTOBER 2024

Bulk billing funding must assist existing practices

AMA Queensland Election Priorities 2024

Labor's election commitment of \$365 million to establish 50 new bulk billing general practices is well-intentioned but shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the pressures facing existing practices.

"Medicare rebates and bulk billing are largely the responsibility of the federal government, so it is good to see the state government's commitment to primary care and general practice. This is needed because successive federal governments have failed," AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim said.

"However, this announcement is a surprise and I am concerned that governments at all levels do not truly understand the operational costs of a general practice.

"This is another announcement about new infrastructure, not about assisting patients to access their regular GP and practice.

"We do not have an infrastructure shortage – we have a workforce shortage. We urgently need more doctors, nurses, allied healthcare practitioners and administration staff to keep our existing clinics open.

"We need to stop splitting our healthcare workforce with costly and inefficient new centres like urgent care clinics, nurse-led walk-in clinics and these proposed new bulk billing centres.

"This is a substantial investment that could benefit all Queenslanders, not just those in 50 unspecified locations.

"It takes time and money to build and fit out new centres. Most patients have GPs who they already know and trust, and governments should fund them to access their trusted GP and practice staff who know them and have been caring for them.

"We are in a cost-of-living crisis and measures that make it easier for patients to see their GP are welcome.

"For decades, successive federal governments from both sides of politics have continued to collect the Medicare levy without ensuring the rebate to patients for their GP care kept pace with inflation and the cost of providing that care.

"The Medicare rebate is now too low for GPs to be able to bulk bill all patients.

"Setting up new, taxpayer-funded clinics is like putting a Band-aid on a broken leg. It is not sustainable and does not fix the underlying issue.

"We welcome Labor's commitment to consult with us on the locations of these clinics. We will be using those consultations to find real solutions to healthcare affordability.

"We have seen a real step forward with both major parties committing to exempt Queensland general practices from the new interpretation of payroll tax.

Australian Medical Association Queensland – Media Release

"We now need both parties to commit to supporting existing practices. We have seen too many general practices close in regional Queensland.

"It is time to invest in the practices we have now and help them to stay open.

"Access to a regular GP is the most cost effective and proven way to keep people healthy and out of hospital in the first place.

"However, bed block is the main reason our hospitals and EDs are overwhelmed.

"We need to free up hospital beds so patients who do need inpatient treatment can move through our hospitals and get the care they need when they need it, including elective surgery.

"That is how we can relieve pressure on our hospitals and EDs.

"We call on both parties to fully implement our [Surgical Wait List Roundtable Action Plan](#) and [Election Priorities](#) to give all Queensland patients the health services they deserve."

Contact: AMA Queensland Media: +61 419 735 641

media@amaq.com.au