



**Monday, 3 February 2025**

**Transcript: AMA President, Dr Danielle McMullen, Press Conference, Parliament House**

**Subject: Out-of-date Medicare at critical point**

**DR DANIELLE McMULLEN:** I'm Dr Danielle McMullen, and the President of the Australian Medical Association, and a GP, and I am so excited today to be launching our Modernise Medicare campaign.

General practice is the cornerstone of healthcare in Australia, and the foundation of that is built on Medicare. But Medicare was built in 1984 and it's out-of-date. It was built at a time when people had one or two simple problems to see the GP and didn't need more than a few minutes. We now find ourselves in a time when people have more chronic disease, more mental illness, more problems to see the GP with — and, in fact, even the treatment of simple problems has become more complex — so all Australians need a little bit more time with their GP. In fact, the average consultation time in general practice in Australia is now 18.7 minutes.

Medicare was not built to support that consultation length. We're reaching a critical point of no return, where no government will be able to make up the difference after decades of a Medicare freeze and inadequate indexation. But at the AMA, we have a plan to Modernise Medicare — to revolutionise Medicare rebates for all Australians to address the workforce shortage in general practice, and to make sure the system is fit for the future, as well as delivering team-based care in general practice.

On Medicare rebates, we plan to introduce a seven-tier Medicare item structure — so that's two extra time tiers when you're visiting the GP to allow more flexibility, better rebates back into the pockets of all Australians to make sure you get the Medicare rebate you deserve. This reform will deliver major and lasting reforms. It will put better rebates back into the pockets of all Australians, and deliver a fairer Medicare for everyone. We've built this reform over the past 18 months and tested it with GPs across the country, so we are confident it will work.

We all know there's a shortage of GPs in Australia, and if we do nothing, we will be more than 10,000 GPs short in just six years' time. To address that, we need to attract more junior doctors into general practice. We need to reform the employment conditions for GP trainees, and make sure their pay and conditions are equitable with their hospital-based counterparts. We also need to make sure that junior doctors have more opportunities to experience general practice — to come into clinics like mine, have a go at general practice, work with our teams, meet our patients, and understand what a rewarding career it can be. And once we've lured them into that career, we need the capacity to train them, so we're calling on the Government to fund an additional 500 general practice training places. Together, these reforms will address the shortage of GPs facing Australians and make sure you can get access to the care you need.

For the many Australians with chronic disease, we know it takes a team to look after you, and that it's convenient to be able to access all of that care under one roof. To better support team-based care in general practice, we're asking government to improve the WIP payment, which is a payment to general practices to

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hire more nurses, more allied health staff so that we can work together and deliver all the care you need under one roof.

And lastly, to make sure that our system remains fit for the future, we obviously need research and policy development in general practice. We've been working in a data vacuum and a knowledge vacuum for the past decade since funding for the last large research project in general practice was scrapped, so we're asking the Government to reinvest in data collection and high-quality research in general practice.

As a GP, I know this suite of reforms will help me take the best possible care of my patients, and it will help Australians across the country access high-quality, comprehensive general practice care.

Ahead of the election this year, we're asking government and the Opposition to put the health of Australians first this election and Modernise Medicare. Happy to take questions.

**QUESTION: Have you had any discussions with the Government about this?**

So we have had initial conversations with both the Government and the Opposition about this plan, so they're well aware of what we're asking for. And we're really working together with both sides to make sure that they put the health of Australians first and invest in Medicare as the solution to our healthcare issues.

**QUESTION: The Labor Government seem to suggest every election that the Liberal government will disassemble Medicare. Have you had any sense that that's going to happen this time?**

Medicare is the bedrock of our healthcare system and clearly can't be disassembled. It's been here since the '80s, and while it needs reform, it certainly still needs to exist. And we're pushing for these reforms to Modernise Medicare and make sure that it lasts another 40 years.

**QUESTION: So do the Liberals support Medicare? Do you get that sense?**

So our conversations so far with both sides have been encouraging, that both are looking for solutions to improve the healthcare of Australians, and we're certainly putting our plan forward to both of them.

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