MEDIA RELEASE

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Doctors launch ‘Don’t get sick in Vic’ campaign calling on all parties to commit to health system reform ahead of the Victorian election

AMA Victoria has today launched ‘Don’t get sick in Vic’, an election campaign built around its election statement “Priorities for the next Victorian Government,” challenging all political parties to make ten key commitments to rebuild Victoria’s health system and give voters a clear picture of where they stand on healthcare.

AMA Victoria will establish a live election scorecard that tracks political parties' commitments against each of the ten priorities.

AMA Victoria will promote the scorecard throughout the election campaign, including in marginal electorates, and release a final assessment of the parties’ commitments in the week before Victorians go to the polls.

AMA Victoria President Dr Simon Judkins said Victorians deserved to know which parties were prepared to undertake the difficult, long-term reform required to address growing pressure across the Victorian health system.

“Victoria has excellent doctors and health services, but too many patients are waiting too long for the care they need. Doctors are being asked to work in a system under enormous pressure.

“We have patients spending unacceptable periods in emergency departments waiting for beds, lengthy waits for specialist care, serious pressure on mental health services and regional communities struggling with workforce shortages and reduced access to care.

“At the same time, our doctors are dealing with understaffing, fatigue and unsustainable working hours while trying to provide the safest and highest quality care possible.

“These problems are interconnected, and they cannot be fixed through isolated announcements or by simply shifting pressure from one part of the health system to another.

“Additionally, supporting access to primary and community care must be a key focus. We need to deliver greater support for general practice, encourage greater access to preventative care, and ensure issues such as the payroll tax on GPs are reviewed and removed.

“Access to specialist care must also be a key focus, and government must boost the number of specialists in an expanded range of public outpatient clinics.

“That is why today we are launching ‘Don’t get sick in Vic’ and putting ten clear commitments to every political party contesting the Victorian State election.

“We want every party to tell Victorians what they will fund, when they will deliver it, who will be accountable and how they will demonstrate that their reforms are actually working.

“We want political parties to lay out how they are going to deliver the capacity, workforce and reform and the additional health system resources the people of Victoria need.”

Dr Judkins said the live scorecard would give voters a clear, accessible way to compare the major political parties' health policies throughout the election campaign.

“AMA Victoria is nonpartisan. We will engage with all political parties and seek the strongest possible commitments to improving healthcare for Victorians.

“With political parties sending representatives to the healthcare debate this weekend, we’re keen to understand their position on our ten commitments to fixing the Victorian healthcare system.

“None of these priorities are new, and many of these commitments have already been asked of the political parties. Our election statement simply brings them together, while the campaign scorecard seeks a clear response from each party.

“Our role is not to tell Victorians how to vote. Our role is to make sure they know what each party is prepared to do about the issues that matter most to them.

“As parties announce their policies, we will update our scorecard so doctors, patients and communities can see clearly which of these reforms they have committed to delivering.

“We will take that information directly into communities across Victoria, particularly in marginal electorates where voters will play a decisive role in determining the next government.

“In the final week of the campaign, Victorians will be able to look at the completed scorecard and make their own judgement about which parties have put forward a credible plan for the future of our health system.”

Dr Judkins said the campaign reflected concerns doctors and patients have raised for years about pressure across the health system.

“Our emergency departments cannot function properly if there are no hospital beds available for patients who need admission.

“The provision of hospital beds cannot solve the problem if there are not enough doctors and other health professionals to staff them.

“And patients cannot leave hospital safely if rehabilitation, aged care, mental health, disability and community services are not available when they need them.

“We need a health system that supports the patient through their entire journey and has the workforce, infrastructure and information systems required to provide safe and timely care.

“The next Victorian Government has an opportunity to make lasting changes to healthcare in this state.

“We are asking every political party to make clear before election day whether they are prepared to take that opportunity or not.”

AMA Victoria’s ten commitments for the next Victorian Government

1. **End dangerous delays in hospital care.**
   Fund the staffed acute, subacute, and rehabilitation capacity needed to reduce access block; require review and corrective action for emergency department stays of more than 24 hours; and publicly report the results.

2. **Make specialist care visible and navigable.**
   Publish standardised waiting-time data, introduce a one-referral approach and fund the specialist positions and services needed to reduce delays.

3. **Restore capacity for severe and acute mental illness.**
   Fund additional acute, subacute and rehabilitation services and the specialist workforce required to operate them, and provide transparent reporting on capacity, access and outcomes.

4. **Give chronic pain proper priority.**
   Expand public multidisciplinary pain services, particularly in regional Victoria, strengthen the pain medicine workforce and report demand, waiting times and patient outcomes.

5. **Keep general practice, community health and private specialist practice viable.**
   Stop shifting unfunded work onto medical practices, protect community health general practice services and provide a full payroll tax exemption for general practice and private specialist medical services.

6. **Build the medical workforce Victoria needs.**
   Deliver a fair public hospital doctors’ enterprise agreement, expand training places in line with workforce need, create sustainable public specialist positions and improve workforce planning and transparency.

7. **Give doctors' time back and support safe, sustainable careers.**
   Remove unnecessary duplication and administration and strengthen protections against fatigue, occupational violence, unsafe workloads and exploitation.

8. **Deliver regional and rural health equity.**
   Establish a parliamentary inquiry into regional healthcare and take immediate action on extreme hospital delays, workforce shortages, digital infrastructure,e and the cost of travelling for care.

9. **Protect prevention and act earlier.**
   Reconsider dissolving VicHealth, protect dedicated prevention funding and independent public health expertise, and improve equitable access to proven prevention programs.

10. **Connect the system and make reform work.**
    Deliver a statewide electronic medical record and interoperable referral system, put medical leadership at the centre of reform and ensure new models of care are safe, connected and properly evaluated.

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