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Doctors deliver low score on state election report card

Doctors are disappointed at the failure of Queensland's political parties to make healthcare a focus of their campaigns as they vie to form the next state government.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland has scored both major parties with a grade of 'below average' when measured against its *11-Point Action Plan – The Pathway to Better Health for Queenslanders*.

"In the midst of a pandemic that has served as a stark reminder of the importance of our health system and the expertise of its frontline workers, it's simply not good enough," said AMA Queensland President, Professor Chris Perry.

"We welcome the commitment by both the ALP and the LNP to recruit extra doctors and other health workers to ease the burden on our frontline staff, however, there's been radio silence from both on our key call to include doctors in healthcare decisions rather than allow bureaucrats to determine how hospitals deliver care."

Professor Perry said the ALP's decision to introduce euthanasia laws if it wins government, contrary to its original decision to wait for the findings of the Queensland Law Reform Commission, placed further pressure on the need to resource the over-stretched palliative care system.

"Labor's promise of \$171 million over six years for palliative care services is a first step in the right direction, but it falls far short of the \$277.4m per year called for in our action plan," he said. "Voluntary assisted dying is applicable to a small minority, so it's really important Queenslanders know their end-of-life suffering can be managed effectively."

AMA Queensland Vice-President Dr Bav Manoharan said the LNP's plan for a trial of reintroducing maternity services at Chinchilla and Theodore hospitals was a positive sign of some healthcare services in rural and regional areas being restored, but much more was needed.

"Neither major party has responded to our calls to improve healthcare in rural and remote communities by allowing private GPs to work in local hospitals, providing extra training for rural generalists and calling on all rural Hospital and Health Services to cover the accommodation costs of visiting doctors," he said.

"These sorts of systemic changes would cost as little as \$2.3m but would deliver life-changing healthcare access and equity for rural Queenslanders."

Dr Manoharan also welcomed the LNP's promise to address the ice epidemic, with a key platform of the AMA's 11-Point Action Plan calling for more addiction medicine positions, a stronger role for GPs in managing the use of opioids, designated outreach centres and better education on prescribing practices for GPs and other health professionals.

"It is, however, disappointing that neither the ALP nor the LNP would commit to the call by doctors to invest \$1.7m in supporting the wellbeing of all of our junior doctors in the first five years of practice, despite a damning report released on Wednesday that found 48 per cent of

Queensland's trainee doctors feared they would make a clinical mistake because of fatigue from working exhaustively long hours," he said.

"Doctors and healthcare workers in general have been working even longer hours this year with the risk of COVID on patients and communities. With burn out, anxiety and depression a serious issue for junior doctors, this is a particularly disappointing outcome."

Professor Perry said the call for \$4m in designated funding to improve equity of healthcare for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients had also gone unanswered during the election campaign.

"The poor health outcomes of ATSI peoples cast a shadow of shame over Queensland," he said.

"First Nations people die 10 years younger and have much higher death rates than non-indigenous people across all age groups and for all major causes of death.

"We need a dedicated, culturally appropriate hospital network that provides pre-operative education, transport to and from health facilities as well as accommodation to improve health outcomes for ATSI Queenslanders."

Find AMA Queensland's *11-Point Action Plan – The Pathway to Better Health for Queenslanders* [HERE](#)

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