

MEDIA RELEASE

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Scapegoats: specialist fee speculation unfair to medical profession

The federal government's decision to make specialist doctors the villain of this year's budget is an egregious ploy to distract from its own failings.

With one week to go before the 2026 budget is handed down, AMA Queensland has warned that scapegoating doctors for high specialist fees will score short term political points but lead to greater hurt for patients.

It follows reports Canberra will explore capping specialist fees to reduce out-of-pocket costs for patients.

"The federal government's media campaign against specialists is unfair and unhelpful at a time when Australia needs more doctors, not fewer," President Dr Nick Yim said.

"Specialists study and train for years to acquire their skills, and most charge fair fees that reflect the costs of delivering quality healthcare.

"AMA Queensland's 2026 Medical Costs Guide analysis shows the government is giving patients only 35% of the real costs of common specialist consultations."

Dr Yim said Australians deserved better than tired political manoeuvring.

"The real issue is the triple whammy of successive government failures," he said.

"First is the government's failure to increase Medicare rebates in step with the rising costs of healthcare.

"Second is the government's failure to properly fund our public hospitals, forcing patients to pay for private care or wait years on lengthy public lists.

"Third is the government's failure to properly regulate private health insurers, approving premium increases and shareholder profits while patients experience declining real value in their cover," Dr Yim said.

"Instead of funding reform, Health Minister Mark Butler is using political distraction to pass blame and tar the whole medical profession with a greedy brush.

"Australia is experiencing a workforce crisis in the health sector, and the Minister should be sitting down with advocacy groups to discuss actual solutions, not portraying hardworking professionals as predatory opportunists."