



**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC**

**Dr David King, AMA(SA) President 1982 – 1983**

During my AMA(SA) Presidential term the AMA(SA) faced many important issues including the changes to the Medical Practitioners Act in 1982. Up until this time medical practitioners in South Australia were not allowed to incorporate and therefore were prohibited from contributing to superannuation.

This change to the Act has produced long term benefits for medical practitioners since that date. The composition of the Medical Board was altered to include a wider representation of the community and dispelled the commonly held view that the Board was sympathetic to medical practitioners.

There had been extensive lobbying of all political parties prior to the first reading of the Act by the Minister of Health, Jennifer Adamson and on the very day that the Bill was being introduced to Parliament, the Premier David Tonkin called an election which the Liberal party lost. Consequently the whole process had to be repeated with Dr John Cornwall the new Labor Minister of Health and who had been in conflict with the medical community prior to the election. The negotiations were prolonged and difficult but the new Act was eventually passed with the help of the Democrats.

Joint meetings between the AMA, country representatives of the AMA(SA), specialists from the major hospitals and the government were held to facilitate the training of country doctors and the coordination of retrieval services. As a result of these meetings visits to the country centres by retrieval specialists were implemented.

Discussions were held with the major private hospitals with a view to establishing after-hours emergency treatment services with visiting specialists by establishing a roster system for each hospital. General practitioners who were working after hours had experienced difficulty arranging assessment of privately insured patients who may have required admittance to hospital. There was some resistance to the policies as many believed that the service was already being provided, but eventually, Ashford and to a lesser extent St Andrews Hospital implemented a roster system.

The Annual General Meetings had become lack lustre events held in Newland House generally with a core of only twenty to thirty members attending. A change in venue to the Hilton Adelaide and the new format of the AGM followed by a dinner dance resulted in over three hundred doctors and their partners attending with an enthusiastic result.

Another change was the new format of the monthly journal, the SA Medical Review (currently known as medicSA), was changed to make it more attractive and to encourage more members to gain knowledge of the AMA(SA) activities.

The press had given a large amount of publicity to Medicare fraud and this was constantly damaging the image of the profession. Although the fraud was perpetuated by only a few members the implications for the profession were enormous. This problem was addressed by educating the medical practitioners on the need for accurate billing processes and the AMA meeting with representatives of Medicare and publicly condemning illegal practices.



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In 1983 the decriminalisation of the use and cultivation of marijuana for personal use had won overwhelming support at the ALP State Conference and the legislation was introduced into State Parliament by the new Labor State Government. The position of the AMA was that there was not any effective means on detecting the effects of marijuana on driving and on skills in the workplace. These views were voiced in the press and to the government however the bill was subsequently passed.

Finally I would like to recognise the support of the secretariat, Mr Ian Dobbie and Mrs Tina Evans, who provided an enormous assistance to the President and Council and ensured the efficient management of the AMA(SA).