



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

**Dr Trevor Mudge, AMA(SA) President 1996 - 1998  
(Abstract of his annual reports)**

Since I believe the vast majority of doctors have an interest in equity and accessible health care delivery for their patients, I have vigorously opposed the view, widely held amongst bureaucrats, that the medical profession should be excluded from decision making in relationship to health care delivery because of 'self interest'. I believe that decades of such exclusion has produced a bitter harvest.

Successive Health Ministers have made great capital out of attacking the profession. Dr Michael Woolridge was often heard to say that he was the Minister for Health, not the Minister for Doctors. While I make no excuses for the AMA going in to bat over industrial and political matters in relationship to incomes of doctors, this is far from being our principal motive.

Surveys have shown that it has more credibility on public health issues than any other institution, including universities. It is a pity that this credibility can't always translate as strongly as it might into the political arena.

Given all the limitations it is perhaps surprising that we are able to achieve as much as I believe we do. The response to the criticism, 'What has the AMA done for me?', is really 'What would have happened to you if it wasn't for the AMA? Because of political representation through the AMA we do not have the ravages of managed care which have devastated health care delivery in America, or the excesses of nationalised medicine such as exist in the UK and Canada.

Financially we are starting to look in reasonable state. Membership in South Australia has been static for the last five years or so. This is, of course, personally disappointing to me. That we are able to do so much with resources we have is a tribute to the dedication and enthusiasm of the secretariat.

A change of Federal Government produced no respite in the plethora of issues for the profession to confront.

**Provider Numbers**

In the Federal Budget of August 1996 a proposal (resulting in legislation) was introduced to deny access to Medicare provider numbers to newly qualified doctors until, and unless, they completed further training. The AMA has always supported the need for appropriate further training, however the absence of any commitment from the Government to provide enough training positions for all new graduates seeking them, and the principle of using provider numbers as a means of controlling the profession, produced a degree of resistance from the profession which probably surprised the Minister.

**Australian Competition and Consumer Commission**

There is about to be a revolution in thinking in the profession brought about by the application of competition policy to the health 'industry'. The traditional capacity of the profession to self regulate in the areas of advertising and other matters of an ethical nature will not be retained and it will be important to ensure the changes work for the good of both the profession and the patients we serve.



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**House Appeal**

This year sees the finalisation of the AMA House Appeal. Whilst the original target of the Appeal has not been realised, the generosity and support of all those who have contributed has enabled the AMA to retain ownership and management of AMA House.

**Managed Care**

South Australia has seen a number of national initiatives by the health funds seeking to pursue the concept of managed care. Since the passage of the 'Lawrence Legislation' nearly two years ago there have been only a handful of contracts between the health funds and doctors around the country. Basically this attempt to introduce USA-style managed care to Australia has failed. The funds are now seeking to control private medical practice in Australia through contracts between themselves and hospitals. The capacity to restrict choice, innovation and quality of private health care in Australia should be widely recognised by the profession.