



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
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AMA(SA): Suspend Country Health Plan

AMA(SA) Executive Councillor Dr Peter Sharley today called on the government to suspend the Country Health Plan pending further dialogue with doctors, representative organisations and the community.

'The AMA(SA) is fundamentally concerned that, yet again, we have a plan to reform health services which has been released without doctors having been consulted in its construction,' said Dr Sharley.

'This is a major about-face from previous dealings with country doctors, for example, the 2005 *'Recognising the past, Rewriting the future'* compact with rural doctors, which was developed from the ground up. In contrast, this continues an unfortunate 'crash through or crash' approach to health reform since the last election.

'The Country Clinical Governance Committee, the forum to make recommendations on clinical health planning and clinical governance, has not been consulted about the plan. The Chief Consultants – specialist appointments by Country Health to advise the government on clinical service delivery – have not been consulted. Doctors on the ground have not been consulted. Other health workers and communities have not been consulted.

'We've been told the plan is now out for consultation – but judging by the cost of the glossy brochure and accompanying advertising campaign, it appears that the plan is presented as a *fait accompli*. This does not augur well for rural South Australia.

'Country SA is not homogenous. A 'one size fits all' Country Health Plan that looks to downgrade 43 smaller country hospitals to GP Plus Emergency Hospitals – or casualty clearing stations – will have many 'follow-on' consequences for health in rural communities. These must be properly considered.

'We acknowledge there are real issues raised in the plan – but these need to be considered in consultation with practising clinicians, and with the doctors actually delivering the services and their communities.

'In the circumstances, the government should suspend further promotion of the plan to enable this to occur' concluded Dr Sharley.

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