



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

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Country Health Plan Taskforce: AMA(SA) Response

The AMA(SA) today cautiously welcomed the government's announcement that a new Taskforce will be established to give advice to the government on the Country Health Plan and the scope of services to be provided at GP Plus Emergency Hospitals.

AMA(SA) spokesperson Dr Peter Sharley said that the announcement of the taskforce was a recognition by the government that the Country Health Plan, as announced, contained a range of problems that the government is now seeking to address.

'In our view, much heartache has been caused for rural communities through the decision to release the Plan without proper clinical and community input in the development stages. Hopefully the announced taskforce will lift the cloud hanging over some communities at risk of losing health services', said Dr Sharley.

'Of course, many smaller country hospitals continue to face the threat of seeing their medical and health services downgraded over the coming ten years. The reasons given for this in the Plan are the available medical and nursing workforce, and safety and quality compliance – both issues that, from 1 July 2008, the Minister for Health is directly accountable for.

'The AMA(SA) will therefore seek assurance that the government is committed to maintaining suitably trained doctors and sustainable rural health services into the future. Attrition of the health workforce should not determine future health care standards. Recruitment, retention and training should be the focus to secure the required health standard.

AMA(SA) is more than willing to work with the government to see health services to Country South Australians maintained and improved.

'We would welcome the opportunity to be involved on the Taskforce, provided the representation arrangements, objectives and Terms of Reference are acceptable,' concluded Dr Peter Sharley.

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