



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

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Festering Specialist pay inequities- time to treat

The AMA(SA) Branch Council last night expressed deep sadness at the divisive and adversarial negotiations for the new salaried doctors Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA), in the wake of 140 fresh resignations of physicians, paediatricians and obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) specialists.

AMA(SA) President Dr Peter Ford said that the AMA(SA) was dismayed at the government's differing treatment of different specialty groups in public hospitals with, at last count, 14 different offers for different groups of specialists in public hospitals either on the table, or concluded.

'The government's approach can only be a recipe for disharmony with doctors,' said Dr Ford.

'Instead of making things better, this is making things worse. It beggars belief that the government can, on the one hand, deliver notable salary increases for some, and yet still manage to crush the goodwill and trust of public hospital doctors in the process.

'You cannot have a situation in which doctors working side by side to treat patients are paid at vastly different rates. No employees anywhere would tolerate such a situation, and doctors are no different.

'The present dispute with the physicians, O&G specialists and paediatricians is about the fact that we have a government that appears happy to place a higher value on procedural medicine over non-procedural medicine. Having done deals with surgeons and others, how can the government now turn around and say that physicians aren't worth it?

'Whether intended or not, the message from the government is that if you are not the sort of doctor seen on *Gray's Anatomy* or *ER*, you're not quite as important to the system.

'That's insulting, and it's a direct attack on their professional standing.

'We are concerned that the government may not fully appreciate the role of non-procedural doctors in the health system. The patients of South Australia, and the health system itself, need them equally.

Dr Ford also said that leaving a pay discrepancy between surgeons and physicians risked skewing SA's medical workforce into the future, with physician trainee doctors

choosing to go interstate for better opportunities, and junior doctors making career choices away from paediatrics, geriatrics, oncology, respiratory medicine and others.

'Many of these specialities will be in great demand by our public hospitals as the population ages,' said Dr Ford.

'The AMA(SA) calls on the government to swiftly address the matter of equity to preserve what goodwill is left in the public system.'

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