



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

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Ambulant Ambos not the Answer: AMA(SA)

AMA(SA) president Dr Peter Ford today voiced fresh criticisms of plans to substitute Extended Care Paramedics for doctors, in the wake of an AMA(SA) Council resolution expressing grave reservations about the use of ambulance officers in this fashion.

‘The AMA(SA) supports entirely the work of ambulance officers and other recognised health practitioner groups, but we do not support them working beyond the scope of their skill and training,’ said Dr Ford.

‘The AMA(SA) cannot support this current paramedic curriculum and 6 week training program. To conduct training for Extended Care Paramedics so that they can prescribe, determine x-rays and interpret blood results is totally inappropriate and ventures into a medico-legal minefield.

‘To support such a foray into medical treatment and care displays a lack of insight from the government and health bureaucrats.

‘It is not fair for patients to be put to these risks and it’s not fair on the paramedics either. Medical insight and training is needed to properly assess, diagnose and treat patients.

‘The fact is that doctors ‘carry the can’ for misdiagnosis and medical mistakes. It is why the medical profession has an extensive code of ethics, highly documented professional standards, and medical indemnity insurance.

‘Doctors are tired of being excluded from patient management decisions by well-meaning health practitioners, ambulance officers, independent midwives and others – only to be ‘tagged in’ at the last minute when things go ‘pear-shaped’.

‘We see a calculated government policy aimed at encouraging health practitioner groups to experiment in providing health services by taking on additional duties beyond the bounds of their discipline. We are concerned that formal ethical approval for these experiments is circumvented. Often this is squared away by simply adding "under the supervision of a doctor" in the fine print. But medical supervision must be real, or it is no safeguard for patients at all.

‘Governments and health bureaucrats will have a lot to answer for when failures occur.

'Doctors are making it clear to the AMA(SA) that they will not see their indemnity cover taken for granted, with doctors being expected to take the risks when other health professionals dabble with new forms of health services provision.

'We are stepping backwards with these models which substitute partially-trained workers for doctors. Other initiatives which support the comprehensive care doctors provide should be considered first. Transport assistance is but one of these.

'This costly paramedic model which has been put forward is not sustainable, and is a cost SA should not have to bear, while federal government abrogates its responsibility to ensure adequate numbers of registered nurses in nursing homes, and appropriate facilities for doctors to care for patients there.

'The community must wake up to what is happening to their access to medical services. The community needs doctors to provide holistic patient care, not doctor substitution,' concluded Dr Ford.

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