



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

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Health holds its own in tough times

AMA(SA) President Dr Andrew Lavender said that the 4 billion dollar health budget handed down by the government today is recognition of the ever increasing demands on health.

'That the Government continues to invest in health should be acknowledged. This is due in part to a better funding deal with the Commonwealth – something the AMA has called for for some time.

'While the health budget announced today represents an 11% increase on last year's budget. AMA(SA) notes that spending on health for the current year is likely to run over budget by more than 8%. This means the real increase for the coming year is under 3% and with increasing demand on health services and steeply rising costs, the worry is always whether it will be enough.

The government is also investing record expenditure on capital works (\$360 million). While much of this is a continuation of previous announcements, a key exception is the new medical research facility which should prove to be a boon to research in this state.

The additional money for out-of-hospital strategies to care for people in their own homes is good; and we support the investment here.

While we are pleased with the decision not to proceed with the mental health facility at Mobilong, we are very concerned that existing secure mental health facilities are inadequate.

The additional \$4.9 million earmarked for sustainment works for the current RAH to keep it going still does not allow the ageing RAH to meet the demands placed upon it. The RAH is our key central hospital – currently operating at full capacity – and it needs more invested to keep it fully functional.

While the budget provides for 160 additional full-time nursing and midwifery positions, there is nothing for the expansion of junior doctor trainee positions in our public hospitals.

'We have a rapid expansion of medical graduates who are now at the doorstep of our public hospitals. They require ongoing education and training to become full contributors to our health system. The time is now critical for the government to acknowledge - and fund – this pressing need,' concluded Dr Lavender.

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