



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

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AMA(SA): New President Elected

At the AMA(SA)'s Annual General Meeting on 7 May 2009, public hospital anaesthetist Dr Andrew Lavender was elected president of the AMA(SA) for the coming year.

Dr Lavender, who has served the AMA(SA) as vice-president for the past two years and has been a member of the AMA(SA) Council since 2000, was elected unopposed. He takes over the reins from Dr Peter Ford, who retains an involvement with the AMA(SA) as immediate past president.

Dr Lavender gained his medical degree from the University of Adelaide and spent nine years working in the UK and Ireland before returning to South Australia. He works at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Dr Lavender acknowledged the hard work and dedication of his predecessor, Dr Peter Ford, who remains a member of the AMA's federal council, of which Dr Lavender is also a member.

"Peter Ford has been a strong advocate for primary care as the cornerstone of the health system, and is especially passionate about the need to do more for aged care. The AMA(SA) will continue to advocate in these areas, and for improved collaboration between general practice and the public hospital sector," he stated.

While acknowledging that the current economic climate will put some constraints on spending in the upcoming state budget, he emphasised that this makes the government's commitment to supporting and funding health even more important.

"Poor health has high costs for individuals and communities, and an investment in health is more than an investment in people's wellbeing – it is an investment in our future."

“We cannot afford to let down our public hospital system, which has gone underfunded for too long. Mental, country and Indigenous health are other urgent priorities,” he stated.

“We have a world class health system, but it is a system under pressure. Governments are looking for answers to meet the challenges of an ageing population with increasing health needs, while at the same time we are dealing with inherited workforce shortages.

“It is really vital that in facing these challenges, governments and health decision-makers consult with those actually on the ground, delivering services. Too often, decisions in health are not clinically informed – which is bad for patients and the system. The first and last word should really be about what is best for patients. It is what we are all working for, and consultation and respect for the expertise of those working in the system is key to achieving it,” he stated.

While Dr Lavender takes up his duties immediately, retiring president Dr Peter Ford will ceremonially hand over the reins to Dr Lavender at the AMA(SA)’s Annual Dinner on 16 May. Dr Jon Sporne, a full-time general practitioner in suburban Adelaide, was elected unopposed to the role of AMA(SA) vice-president.

8 May 2009

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