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The RAH of the future : what it needs

The AMA(SA) last night held a meeting with Dr David Panter, Executive Director, Health Reform from the Department of Health and Minister Hill's Chief of Staff Dr Dominic Stefanson.

The meeting was arranged following a request by the AMA(SA) to the SA Minister for Health, John Hill for specific details on the new Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH). The AMA(SA) was responding to the growing frustration experienced by doctors at the lack of consultation with senior clinicians on the new hospital. Doctors from several major hospitals attended for the 2 hour meeting to express their concerns.

Dr Peter Sharley, AMA(SA) President made it clear at the meeting that the AMA(SA) was not criticising the new hospital as a concept. The meeting was about ensuring the best medical system and best hospital services for the future.

Key outcomes from the meeting include:

1. Clarification that The Queen Elizabeth Hospital will continue to have a Level 2 Intensive Care Unit consistent with the needs of that hospital in the future.
2. Concern that pathology services in the new RAH have a designated space at this time of only 3500 sq m which is considered too small to house the requirements of a major hospital.
3. Adequate accommodation for clinical research is yet to be resolved.
4. Allocation of designated clinical space for the various clinical specialties will need to be determined through consultation with clinicians.
5. AMA(SA) has asked SA Health for the background documents relating to the total bed number prediction models being relied on for the new development.
6. Extra space in the new RAH may be required to satisfy the above concerns.

It was made clear to the Department of Health and Minister's representatives that a 5 year timeframe to transition services either in or out of the new RAH or TQEH was short and it was necessary that coal face clinicians were included in this process now!

The lack of opportunity to engage to this point was frustrating and clinicians were feeling ignored. Whilst it was clear that certain persons had been identified to speak to clinicians in the hospital, this had either not occurred or the information was so scant as to be unhelpful. Many of those attending did not know who was responsible for their area planning and advised that they had not been approached for any discussion. The AMA(SA) urged the Department and the Minister to address the current deficiencies in communication with those providing the clinical services.

"Hopefully this meeting is the start of an improved dialogue between the Department and those doctors who have provided valuable service to the community for many years and have the expertise and desire to contribute positively to the new hospital" said Dr Sharley.

Drs Panter and Stefanson undertook to respond to all the questions provided in writing.

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Contact: Dr Peter Sharley on (08) 8361 0109 or after-hours on (08) 8361 0101