

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Safe hours audit to look at doctors' risk of fatigue in public hospitals

The Australian Medical Association has launched its 2023 Safe Hours Audit to examine the risk of fatigue amongst public hospital doctors.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said public hospitals doctors had suffered enormous strain over the pandemic years and were now dealing with the impacts of the hospital logjam.

"We know that inadequate resourcing of our public hospitals is placing the system under incredible stress," Professor Robson said.

"That stress is evident in story after story across the country about ambulance ramping and patients waiting years and years for necessary surgery because hospitals just can't meet demand.

"All of this combined means our public hospital doctors are under intense pressure."

The AMA has run the Safe Hours Audit regularly since 2001 to gather data on how many hours public hospital doctors are working over the course of a week and determine the fatigue risks of current working arrangements.

The most recent AMA Safe Hours Audit was in 2016. It found one in two doctors (53 per cent) were working rosters that put them at significant and higher risk of fatigue to the extent that it could impair performance and affect the health of the doctor and the safety of the patient.

It confirmed that doctors at higher risk of fatigue typically work longer hours, longer shifts, have more days on call, less days off and are more likely to skip a meal break.

"We know that fatigue and medical care don't mix," Professor Robson said.

"Fatigue can impair judgement and work performance, and potentially affect patient care and the wellbeing of doctors. We know that serious medical errors increase with frequent long shifts and that extended shifts have a similar effect to working under the influence of alcohol."

Research shows that managing work generated fatigue benefits the health and wellbeing of doctors and contributes to higher quality care, patient safety, and improved health outcomes.

Professor Robson said enforcing rosters is one way of managing fatigue our public hospitals.

"This includes funding for adequate medical staffing of hospitals for safe rostering that allows doctors to take leave, avoiding fatigue and burnout and supporting safe patient care."

The AMA's Safe Hours Audit period is Monday 20 November to midnight Sunday 26 November. Participants will have until midnight on December 22 to fill in their hours for the audit period.

Visit [safehours.ama.com.au](https://safehours.ama.com.au) to take part.

[Read more about the hospital logjam](#)

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