



AMA SA election priorities demand off-ramp solutions to hospital crisis

Media Release – 3 December

South Australians have spent more than 164,000 hours waiting on ambulance ramps since the 2022 state election – the equivalent of more than 18 years lost to delays.

The President of the Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam says that figure must be a wake-up call for politicians and voters as South Australia prepares for the state election in March.

‘Despite promises to “fix ramping”, we have an ongoing crisis in our hospitals. South Australians need and deserve a new approach,’ A/Prof Subramaniam says.

‘Every hour that’s been wasted on the ramp represents a patient – a real person – who has been let down by the system. Every hour represents significant problems in our health system.

‘The response cannot be business as usual. We’re calling on the State Government and Opposition to think bigger and embrace solutions that extend beyond their traditional remit.’

AMA SA is calling for practical, state-level reforms and innovations that A/Prof Subramaniam says are designed to avoid hospital presentations by improving care for people in their homes and communities. They include:

- Funding out-of-hours GP care so practices can stay open longer and offer more appointments
- Providing financial incentives for GPs to care for patients in residential aged care
- Supporting rural health by incentivising specialists to operate regionally and deliver care where patients live
- Strengthening community mental healthcare services, including increasing funding for mobile teams and a 24/7 clinical crisis line
- Axing the payroll tax on doctors to reduce patient costs and remove barriers to GP and specialist care
- Making South Australia a destination of choice for the world’s best doctors by slashing red tape that acts as a barrier
- Ensuring residential aged care staff and ambulance staff follow patients’ wishes and are not transferred unnecessarily to hospital.

AMA SA Vice President Dr Louis Papilion notes that while some recommendations concern general practice and aged care – traditionally the responsibility of the Federal Government – the state cannot side-step its role in these areas.

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'General practice is key to addressing ramping. GPs work at the frontline of care, managing complex and chronic conditions that keep patients well and reduce preventable hospital admissions,' Dr Papilion says.

'We also need better aged care so older South Australians can receive treatment at home or in residential facilities – where they feel most comfortable – rather than staying in hospital longer than needed. Every day an older person remains in hospital unnecessarily means fewer beds for emergency patients.

'It's true that the Commonwealth bears the weight of responsibility in these areas, but our state leaders can and must act too by adopting our recommendations which strengthen community care. Standing by and watching ramping get worse is not an option.'

'Health should be a defining issue at the state election,' A/Prof Subramaniam says. 'When South Australians vote on 21 March, they should choose the party that has a detailed and costed plan to address the problems underpinning ramping.

'The Liberal Opposition has already committed to scrapping the payroll tax on GPs and supporting GPs that stay open longer. We're calling on the Labor Party to match those commitments and adopt our other recommendations.

'AMA SA will announce more election priorities in the lead-up to polling day and stands ready to work with all sides of politics.

'South Australians deserve better than another four years marred by record ramping. It's time for all sides to think bigger and deliver the care our state deserves.'

A/Prof Subramaniam will hold a press conference today. Please confirm attendance with media manager Ben Terry on 0478 847 604.

Time: 12.30 pm

Location: Outside the RAH (see map below)

