



AMA SA welcomes Labor's plan to establish dedicated mental health assessment units

Media Release – 9 February

The Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) has welcomed Labor's pre-election commitment to establish dedicated Mental Health Assessment Units next to major hospital emergency departments.

AMA SA President Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam says the announcement is 'a positive step' that reflects the AMA's long-standing calls for stronger investment in community mental health services.

'For many years, AMA SA – together with the Australian College for Emergency Medicine and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists – has advocated for more community-based mental health services to help people avoid distressing visits to EDs. We're pleased that Labor is listening to doctors on the frontline,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'Crowded, noisy, brightly lit emergency departments are not suitable environments for people experiencing acute mental health crises or drug or alcohol-related episodes.'

'We expect that these dedicated mental health facilities would provide care that is better suited to patients' needs while also relieving pressure on already overstretched EDs.'

The latest [AMA Public Hospital Report Card: Mental Health Edition](#) shows South Australians presenting to emergency departments with mental health conditions waited an average of 11 hours and 18 minutes during the 2023/24 financial year. Alarmingly, one in 10 patients waited 35 hours and 46 minutes – the longest delays of any Australian state or territory.

A/Prof Subramaniam says Labor must now outline how and when the announcement would be implemented if it wins government at the 21 March poll.

'As always, the proof of any policy is in its delivery,' he says.

'South Australians need clarity on how these services would be funded, when they would begin operating, how they would be staffed, and how they would integrate with existing community mental health supports, including those provided by GPs.'

'Any health commitment from any party ahead of the election must come with realistic timelines and sustainable workforce planning to ensure meaningful outcomes for the community.'

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'When the Health Minister and Shadow Health Minister present their policies at the AMA SA Health Debate this Wednesday evening, we will be seeking concrete details about how they will deliver what they promise in a way that makes a genuine difference for the health of our patients and our state.'

Read more about AMA SA's Health Debate [here](#).

Read AMA SA's 2026 Election Priorities document [here](#).

For interview requests, please contact media manager Ben Terry on 0478 847 604.