



AMA report reveals extent of pressure on South Australia's public hospitals

Media Release – 12 March

The Australian Medical Association's [Public Hospital Report Card 2026](#) reveals South Australian patients in need of emergency care and urgent surgery are facing some of the longest delays in the country, despite a significant increase in hospital beds.

The report identifies that 687 additional beds came online during the 2024–25 financial year.

During the same period, the median waiting time for planned essential surgery increased from 47 days to 52 days. Only 59 per cent of category 2, or 'urgent', patients received surgery within the clinically recommended time of 90 days, down from 79 per cent five years ago.

Emergency Department patients confronted unacceptable delays too. Just 44 per cent of those triaged as 'urgent' were seen within the recommended target time of 30 minutes during the 2024–25 financial year. While this represents a six per cent improvement on the previous year, it remains well below the national average of 60 per cent.

AMA SA President Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam says the findings raise concerning questions ahead of next week's state election.

'South Australia's health system is creaking under immense pressure. We acknowledge the State Government's efforts to increase capacity, but this report highlights that beds do not necessarily mean patients get care when they need it,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'During the election campaign we've seen some good ideas from both major parties, but very few concrete answers – particularly about how these policies will deliver real change, or when South Australians will actually feel it.

'Promises and political slogans mean very little for patients stuck in EDs or waiting months for surgery in pain, discomfort and distress.'

In the lead-up to the election, AMA SA has been calling for bold, system-wide reforms that go beyond building more beds.

The recommendations set out in [AMA SA's election priorities](#) include:

- strengthened support for general practice, which sits at the heart of community-based healthcare
- significant investment in community mental health services to ease pressure on hospitals
- urgent action to address the shortage of aged care places
- long-term workforce planning
- improved rural and regional healthcare, so patients can access timely care closer to home

'AMA SA will continue to advocate for innovative, evidence-based reforms that strengthen care in the community, support the medical workforce and improve outcomes for patients,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'This is about moving beyond short-term fixes and political cycles and focusing on practical solutions that are informed by doctors on the coalface of care and driven by the needs of patients.'

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

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