



Suspension of Adelaide-Mount Gambier Qantas flights will undermine patient care

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The Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) is concerned the cancellation of Qantas services between Adelaide and Mount Gambier will reduce access to vital healthcare and lead to poorer patient outcomes.

AMA SA President Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam says the consequences are twofold. 'AMA SA is alarmed by the indefinite suspension of Qantas flights on the Adelaide–Mount Gambier route,' he says.

'Although Rex is still operating, fewer air travel options will make it harder for patients to travel for essential care and far more difficult for visiting specialists to provide services on the ground in Mount Gambier.'

The Limestone Coast region has a population of more than 69,000 people and relies heavily on a large cohort of visiting specialists – many of whom fly in and out to deliver care.

'There's a very real risk some specialists will be forced to travel less frequently,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'That will inevitably delay care and reduce access to specialist services for people in the South East.'

A/Prof Subramaniam says vulnerable patients are likely to be hit hardest.

'Older patients, cancer patients and those managing chronic conditions often need to travel to Adelaide regularly for repeat appointments,' he says.

'They are also the patients most likely to struggle with long drives or bus travel. Our concern is that some people will fall through the cracks – delaying essential care and becoming sicker as a result.'

AMA SA is calling on the State Government to:

- Urgently engage with Qantas and regional stakeholders to resume regular, reliable Qantas flights between Adelaide and Mount Gambier
- Temporarily increase the fuel subsidy under the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATS) so patients can continue to travel by road without facing unacceptable financial stress
- Establish a targeted regional health access plan to protect specialist outreach clinics and metropolitan referral pathways during sudden external disruptions, including interruptions to commercial aviation services

Associate Professor Subramaniam warns that failure to act could have long-lasting consequences for healthcare in the South East.

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'Reduced options for regular, reliable flights will make it harder to attract and retain the permanent medical workforce the region needs,' he says.

'Without action, the loss of these flights will translate into fewer appointments, longer waiting times and poorer health outcomes for people living in the South East.'

Related media release: [AMA SA calls for increased patient travel support amid the fuel crisis](#)

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