



## **AMA SA: South Australians deserve to die with dignity**

**Media Release – 12 May**

**The Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) is warning the state's palliative care system is 'profoundly underprepared' for the demands of a rapidly ageing population.**

During Palliative Care Week (10-16 May), AMA SA President Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam is calling for urgent government action to ensure South Australia has the beds, services and workforce it needs now and into the future.

'Every South Australian deserves to die with dignity,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'In their final weeks and days, they should have timely access to high-quality palliative care, in the place they choose, with the clinical support they need.

'Right now, services are struggling to meet demand – and they're not ready for the avalanche that's coming.'

A report by South Australia's independent Health Performance Council (HPC), published in May last year, found demand for palliative care is growing much faster than population growth.

By 2042, as many as 21,000 people are expected to benefit from palliative care – an increase of up to 116% since 2020.

The report also found there was 'little confidence' this growth in demand had been properly considered in SA Health's strategy for future improvement.

'The measure of a health system is not only how it treats the acutely ill, but how it cares for people at the end of life,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'Behind this widening gap are real people: patients who can't access hospice beds or the community care they need to stay at home.

'The burden is also borne by families, forced to take on the role of carer, without adequate nursing support or after-hours medical care. That's not what a compassionate health system looks like.'

AMA SA is calling on the Government to commit to a range of steps, including:

- Commission an independent review of palliative care bed capacity across metropolitan Adelaide to assess current and projected shortfalls
- Include modelling of demand for hospice and community palliative care in planning for the Greater Northern Adelaide Hospital
- Develop a workforce strategy to ensure patients who wish to be cared for at home have access to nurses and after-hours medical care

- Strengthen integration between community providers, hospital-based palliative care teams and general practice

A/Prof Subramaniam says gaps in palliative care don't just affect individuals – they place additional pressure on an already stretched hospital system.

'The HPC report shows around four out of five South Australians who could benefit from palliative care present to a public hospital in their last year of life, often more than once,' he says.

'Many of these patients end up in emergency departments, frequently arriving by ambulance, and are treated in acute settings that are not designed for end-of-life care.

'That's distressing for patients and families – and it adds to bed block and ramping across the system.

'AMA SA is urging the Government to act with the urgency and scale this challenge demands.'

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

**View the HPC's report on South Australia's palliative care serves [here](#).**

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