



AMA SA welcomes action on coronial inquest recommendations

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The Australian Medical Association in South Australia (AMA SA) welcomes the State Government’s decision to adopt the majority of a coroner’s recommendations aimed at addressing the systemic causes of ramping.

AMA SA President Associate Professor Peter Subramaniam says the move is a positive step, and must also be backed by broader, evidence-based reform.

‘The coronial findings confirm what AMA SA has long said: ramping is not an ambulance problem – it’s a whole-of-system problem,’ A/Prof Subramaniam says.

‘And it’s not improving at the level South Australians deserve and expect. The latest SA Health figures show 3,958 hours were lost on the ramp in May – roughly on par with the 3,949 hours recorded in April.

‘The Government’s commitment to act on 17 of the 18 coronial recommendations will help address bottlenecks when patients arrive at hospital. That is welcome, but it will not be enough on its own.

‘In this week’s Budget and beyond, we are calling for targeted investment in community care – general practice, mental healthcare and aged care – to reduce preventable hospitalisations that drive ramping and bed block in the first place.

‘We need to treat the cause, not just the queue.’

Anna Panella, Bernard Skeffington and Graham Jessett died between April 2019 and March 2022 after they were ramped at South Australian hospitals.

In July last year, Acting Deputy State Coroner Ian White found Mr Skeffington’s death was preventable and Mr Jessett’s was ‘potentially preventable’. He found Mrs Panella’s death was not preventable, but ‘far less dignified’ than she deserved.

A/Prof Subramaniam says the Government must do everything possible to prevent similar cases.

‘As the coroner made clear, it was tragic that these patients were so close to the care they needed, but could not access it,’ A/Prof Subramaniam says.

‘The Government now has an opportunity to act. We will be looking to Thursday’s Budget to see whether funding has been committed to implement these recommendations.

‘We also want to see genuinely new, fully staffed investments in community care to address the root causes of pressure across the hospital system.’

AMA SA notes the only recommendation not yet adopted is the consolidation of Adelaide’s three metropolitan Local Health Networks (LHNs). A/Prof Subramaniam welcomes the Government’s commitment to further review this proposal.

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'Any reform that improves system efficiency is worth considering, and we support the Government's willingness to examine this option to bring Adelaide's LHNs under one umbrella,' A/Prof Subramaniam says.

'As the only organisation representing all doctors in the state, AMA SA stands ready to provide clinical input into this review and to support implementation of the other recommendations.'

For interview requests with A/Prof Subramaniam, please contact media manager Ben Terry on 0478 847 604.

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