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## **AMA URGES CAUTION ON NEW DEFENCE HEALTH SERVICES CONTRACT**

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, is urging the Government to be cautious and vigilant in the operation of defence force health services under the new successful tenderer, which is yet to be made public.

Dr Bartone said that the existing contractor, Medibank Health Solutions (MHS), has been informed by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) that it has been unsuccessful in its bid to continue to provide defence health services under the Garrison Health Services contract.

“The successful tenderer has been advised, but not publicly announced,” Dr Bartone said.

“The AMA will be calling on the Government and the successful tenderer to work closely with the medical profession to ensure that ADF personnel receive the best possible care under the new arrangements.

“Our defence personnel deserve quality health care, but we have witnessed problems in the past.

“The AMA was highly critical of the Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) approach to the provision of medical services when it was first awarded the Garrison Health Services Contract in 2012.

“Many GPs and other medical specialists refused to provide care under the arrangements implemented by MHS.

“There was widespread concern about MHS decisions, including significant fee cuts, unfair contracts, its control of referral arrangements, and poor consultation with the profession – particularly in the initial period after the contract was awarded.

“The AMA has welcomed efforts by the Australian Defence Force to accept AMA input and advice in the development of its tender documents, but the onus is now on the selected provider to avoid making the same mistakes that disadvantage defence personnel and doctors.

“Our serving personnel deserve the best possible care from the right medical professionals, but we must avoid a managed care-style system at all costs.

“The successful tenderer will need to work closely with the profession in the development of suitable contracts for the medical professionals who look after ADF personnel. They will need to implement referral arrangements that are based on choice and quality, not the lowest cost.

“The AMA looks forward to working with the new contractor to ensure our ADF personnel receive the high-quality health services they richly deserve,” Dr Bartone said.

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