



Media Release

Wednesday, 5 March 2014

More doctors needed in Tasmania

Tasmania urgently needs more frontline medical staff, increased competitive working conditions to ensure doctors stay in the state, as well as improved graduate training and job opportunities for young doctors.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) Tasmania is calling on a commitment from all political parties and politicians in the next parliament to address these issues in the lead up to the state election on 15 March.

AMA Tasmania President Dr John Davis said the government was spending too much on inefficient practices instead of tackling the real issue of adequately funding the health sector and offering competitive packages to attract and retain qualified medical students and doctors.

“Regional Tasmania is currently being crippled by the lack of permanent doctors, increasing the use of expensive locums and patching up the issue with a band-aid solution to cover the fact that Tasmanian doctors’ packages aren’t competitive when compared to mainland states,” Dr Davis said.

“At the moment we don’t even have enough doctors in the state to cover leave and professional development commitments, so we certainly can’t afford to lose any more.

“The failure of the Tasmanian Government to offer competitive working conditions means we are constantly losing doctors to the mainland states.

“Those doctors still operating throughout Tasmania are finding it increasingly difficult to take leave to pursue professional development, creating further efficiencies.”

Dr Davis said the shortage of doctors and the ability to take annual leave was also increasing fatigue among those who remain.

“There have also been situations where registers are constantly on call without a break, mounting further pressure on doctors in our public hospitals,” he said.

“These evident pressures mean junior doctors who require support and guidance end up with no desire to work in the Tasmanian health system, even if they are offered a job to begin with.

“We are seeing more and more medical students completing their studies and then moving interstate to work, which is something we can ill afford.”

Dr Davis said AMA Tasmania had taken steps to identify areas of savings for the State Government to allow it to provide public doctors with fair and competitive working conditions.

“The issue is compounded by the fact that Tasmania’s medical workforce is ageing, as is the rest of the population, and we desperately need more doctors now and into the future,” he said.



“In the end it is the Tasmanian community that suffers if numbers of doctors available to see patients decrease and we are unable to attract quality doctors to the state.”

Dr Davis said a redesign of the health system was urgently needed to stop the duplication of services, continual cost shifting between governments, silo mentalities and political pork-barreling, which continued to cause inefficiencies and poor outcomes.

“As health care costs continue to rise, compounded by Tasmania’s ageing population and increasing demand for more sophisticated care, we must work smarter to deliver high quality care in a timely manner to our community,” he said.

“It’s a pivotal time for Tasmania’s health care system and unless action is taken right now to fix our sick health system, including the removal of politics from health care funding, it’s only going to get worse.”

For a copy of the AMA Tasmania 2014 State Election Priorities visit www.amatas.com.au/assets/AMA_2014_v2.pdf

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY: AMA President Dr John Davis will be available for interviews TODAY between 9.30-10.30am at the AMA office located at 147 Davey Street, Hobart.

ENDS

**For more information or interviews: Lucinda Bray, Font PR
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