**Media Release**

**Thursday, 24 March 2016**

**Funding and over capacity to blame, not staff**

AMA Tasmania and the Australian Nurses and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) note the comments by the Tasmanian Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson, regarding the current spate of problems in Tasmanian public hospitals which imply the situation has been caused by human error and inefficiency.

AMA Tasmania and the ANMF reject this suggestion.

The problems which we are currently experiencing are directly related to over capacity and increased demand on the state’s public hospitals.

Australian Industry of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data clearly show that failings in our public hospitals are the result of excess demand and reduced bed and staff numbers, not the inefficiency of staff.

AMA President A/Prof Tim Greenaway said AIHW data also shows Tasmania has fewer public hospital beds per 1000 head of population than the national average.

“It is always possible to do better and we are trying to do better but we do not have enough beds and we do not have enough staff,” said A/Prof Greenaway.

“The beds we do have we use efficiently but it is currently not possible for doctors to treat the number of patients that need treatment and therefore waiting times and waiting lists continue to increase.

“The events of the past week are a reflection of a systemic problem we have in Tasmania’s public hospital system.”

ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary Neroli Ellis said despite the Minister wanting a “disruption to the old ways of running hospital emergency departments”, the Emergency Departments have already implemented a range of innovative models of care to improve patient treatment time.

“These innovations include fast track sections, Emergency Medical Unit, Nurse Navigators to coordinate flow and streaming patient through team based care and patient flow units,” said Mrs Ellis.

AMA Tasmania and the ANMF call on Minister Ferguson to lobby the Federal Government to increase Commonwealth funding to improve Tasmania’s failing public hospital system.AMA Tasmania and the ANMF urge Minister Ferguson, Premier Hodgman and Tasmania’s federal politicians to oppose strongly the proposed cuts to Commonwealth public health funding from 2017.

**ENDS**

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