



## **MEDIA COMMENT**

Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

### **GOVERNMENT HEALTH ANNOUNCEMENT LITTLE MORE THAN A STUNT**

AMA Tasmania President Professor Dr John Burgess commented “today’s hospital funding announcement by the Government smacked of being nothing more than a stunt.

“It is a reannouncement of funding supposedly committed in last year’s budget in which 298 (just two less than this year) extra hospital beds were promised, but nothing of significance delivered.

*“Importantly, this Budget begins the rollout of 298 brand new beds in our hospitals.”* Minister Ferguson 14 June 2018

“Since then nothing much has happened to open those beds and recruit the staff, hence the crisis we are seeing in our EDs across the state, but particularly at the RHH and LGH.

“We need funding for beds and staff to start rolling out now and not just at the RHH. The LGH too is suffering from bed block and ambulance ramping.

“We cannot wait for the refurbishments to be completed for K Block at the RHH before opening new beds. We need beds now. The crisis being seen in our hospitals will not be helped by a slow ramping up of beds over the next four years.

“We will be even more cynical tomorrow if we find that most of the funding is in the out years, with very little starting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July this year.

“The reality is the crisis is hurting right now. Morale is low across the entire health system and we risk more staff leaving, let alone being able to recruit increased numbers of doctors and nurses.”

Professor Burgess said that the AMA has been repeatedly calling for the government to properly fund Tasmania’s hospitals.

“Am I convinced today’s announcement will help? – show me the money in the budget papers for 2019-20, otherwise talk is cheap and we have all heard similar announcements last year that turned out to be hollow.

“Should the money be there for this coming financial year, then the THS needs to start recruiting clinicians to open these extra beds immediately – that’s where the rubber needs to hit the road and AMA wants to see the Minister commit to this publicly as a priority.

“Funding to open more hospital beds is desperately needed – we need to employ the doctors, nurses and other staff required to treat the patients flooding our overcrowded EDs.

“Recruiting the required number of clinical staff to open these hospital beds will have a very long lead time.

“We would expect to see the Tasmanian Health Service being instructed by the Minister to immediately commence a properly resourced advertising and recruitment campaign for the promised 60 new doctors, 300 nurses and 40 allied health staff.



“The Minister needs to be held accountable for the recruitment – to this end there should be monthly public disclosure of the numbers of new doctors and nurses as well as those leaving the system, so the public can see the net increase.

“AMA needs to see an immediate pro-active, open door approach to recruiting the promised staff otherwise the announcement is more than a bit hollow.”

**ENDS**

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