



**Budget ignores key responsibility of Health Services**

“The State Government’s hospital infrastructure spending spree will not compensate for the loss of hundreds of experienced clinicians and training positions in SA hospitals”, says the state’s leading professional association of doctors.

Australian Medical Association (South Australia) President Associate Professor William Tam said the 2017-18 Budget’s focus on health infrastructure had overlooked the critical medical staffing issues the state faced.

“It’s ironic that this budget is being touted as a jobs budget when we have been highlighting the loss of key expertise in the health sector through Transforming Health for some time,” Associate Professor Tam said.

The government has announced its hospital infrastructure projects of \$1.1 billion will create nearly 3000 construction jobs, at the same time the medical profession is facing the loss of senior clinicians, scientists and medical technicians affecting a range of specialties.

While the budget provided additional grant funding for traineeships, the government is prepared for the state to risk losing 20 trainee radiologists in the new RAH. “Does anyone see the irony of this situation?” asks Professor Tam.

At least 20 radiology training positions are likely be lost if the Minister announces that the government will outsource outpatient radiology services, as expected, at the new Royal Adelaide Hospital.

“The loss of radiology training positions is just the tip of the iceberg. If the government goes ahead with this proposal, both the new RAH and the South Australian State radiology training network will lose accreditation,” said Associate Professor Tam.

“We have already seen what happens at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital when you downgrade a unit – you lose your position in the training and research hierarchy, you lose grants and, most importantly, you lose talented people. Is this what this state wants?”

The 2017 budget provides funding for shiny new health infrastructure projects including a new Women’s Hospital, a new proton beam therapy facility at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI), upgrades to the Lyell McEwin, Modbury, Queen Elizabeth Hospitals and Flinders Medical Centre.

Yet it has nothing for medical training, or preventative health and very little for rural health.

“The budget, like the Transforming Health project, has not taken sufficient care to support the system’s greatest source of capital – it’s people - and so we are left to deal with the loss of critical skills from this state,” Associate Professor Tam said.

“Clearly it is wonderful to announce new infrastructure in metropolitan Adelaide but new hospital facilities do not translate into better health care for South Australian patients or quality training for medical professionals. The public is becoming more aware of this.

“The budget notes that the government has stated that Transforming Health is coming to an end, but there is much left undone as far as the AMA(SA) and others in the medical community are concerned. What’s really needed is a strategic long term plan for building a quality health system throughout South Australia and that can only be done in partnership with the clinicians who deliver the care. The AMA(SA) will continue to ask for greater clarity on what clinical services will be delivered to the people of South Australia, where those services will be and who will be there for patients once the builders have left the building” says Professor Tam.

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