

## AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (SA) INC

AMA House, 161 Ward Street, North Adelaide  
PO Box 134 North Adelaide SA 5006  
www.amasa.org.au Fax: (08) 8267 5349



### AMA(SA) welcomes Labor's EPAS move

The Australian Medical Association (South Australia) has welcomed the Labor Party's confirmation that a re-elected Labor Government would institute an independent review into the EPAS electronic medical record system.

An independent review of EPAS to determine if and how it can meet the grade as a 'fit for purpose' electronic health system is one of the major calls in the Association's 'Key Priorities for Health' for this state election.

"EPAS has been a controversial issue for years now," said AMA state president Associate Professor William Tam.

"Everyone agrees about the value of electronic medical records. But the implementation of EPAS had serious problems, with doctors' concerns about the impact of EPAS on patient safety, usability, lost productivity and patient care being grossly underestimated.

"Some of the very real concerns and issues were starkly highlighted in the AMA(SA)'s EPAS survey last year. The AMA(SA) has put forward the issues and fixes identified by our members. An independent review is a welcome step resulting from AMA(SA)'s advocacy following the survey."

"We will be providing any EPAS review with important 'warts and all' feedback from our members who use the system. Reviewers will have from us an insight into its day-to-day use in hospitals from Noarlunga and Port Augusta through to Flinders, the QEH and the new RAH".

"We will also be putting to the review, and to the government of the day, a range of important steps if EPAS is to continue. These are ultimately about making the system more usable and safe:

- Implementation of proximity login cards to reduce the current long waits to log into the system, which create inefficiency and delays. (This was also a recommendation of the Coroner)
- More terminals and improved placement and positioning of screens
- Improved, easier ways for a user to customise the display of information so that critical data is at doctors' and nurses' fingertips
- Better labelling of documents and improved search functions
- Collaboration between SA Health and AMA(SA)'s EPAS working group to make the system more usable and, in particular, the prescribing system workable for clinicians
- Integration with existing IT systems used in health – including primary care access for GPs and private specialists
- Dictation software to be investigated

"EPAS has become an ongoing political target. Given the Labor Government's plans to further roll out EPAS whilst admitting a need to implement improvements across a number of areas that directly impact on patient management and medical care, the question remains, is EPAS fit for purpose?"

"The AMA(SA)'s role is to look beyond the political controversy, and to turn the focus back to what the review must be about: our hospitals having the best medical record and communication system to support the care of our patients."

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