
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

MEDIA RELEASE



Surgeons slam ongoing uncertainty over public hospitals

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South Australian surgeons have expressed dismay over the ongoing uncertainty around the future of the state's public hospital services.

The chair of the South Australian region of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, Mr Peter Subramaniam, said that the public debate about the future of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) is clouding the more pressing issue of whether the new RAH will have sufficient capacity to permit the decommissioning of the old hospital.

"Whilst the Government and Opposition seem to have moved on from this debate, the College, the Australian Medical Association and many surgeons and doctors continue to hold grave reservations about the viability of transferring services from the old RAH to the new RAH," Mr Subramaniam said.

He noted that confusion around the future of public hospital services had been further exacerbated by recent shifts in the Government's previously hard-line positions.

"Having originally said that The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH) would be downgraded and its Intensive Care Unit closed, it now wants to incorporate the TQEH into the new RAH as a single entity.

"Having earlier said it wanted to develop the Lyell McEwin Health Service (LMHS) as major hospital in the north, the Government now seems to be exploring ways of transferring activity from the centre to the north but without funds to upgrade the LMHS.

"The commissioning of 100 new beds at LMHS, which are presumably funded, for clinical purposes which remain unclear to the College of Surgeons is the subject of a series of workshops – just six months before the planned commissioning of the first stage."

"The College notes with concern that the commissioning of new beds does not equate to sufficient infrastructure to accommodate specialist surgical activity – this requires theatres, back up radiology and ICU, specialist nursing, and surgical manpower, from specialty trainees to consultants," Mr Subramaniam said.

"And after earlier claiming that all necessary consultation had been completed, the Government now wants to reinstitute a process of consultation.

"In contrast to the pronouncements emanating from SA Health, the College of Surgeons believes that surgeons, specialist doctors, health care workers and the community need to engage critically with Government and Opposition to ensure that we waste less, and spend that which we have as wisely as possible in a bleak economic environment.

"Spending \$200 million to demolish an old hospital that is currently functioning and that we might still need doesn't seem to be the best use of money that South Australia doesn't actually have," he said.

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