



**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC.**

ABN 91 028 693 268

## **2021 LHN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS RESET**

### **MEMBER UPDATE No. 3**

## **RSS RESPONDS TO OUR CLAIMS**

**1 April 2021**

Welcome to the third edition of this Member Update, which aims to keep you informed about progress towards a replacement agreement with the Local Health Networks (LHNs) through our discussions with the Department for Health and Wellbeing's Rural Support Services (RSS).

On 31 March 2021, the Presidents of both RDASA and AMA(SA) received a written document from RSS that responded to our lodged written claims, which we outlined in Update No. 2 on 17 March. Over two hours yesterday, we worked assiduously to understand and clarify beyond any doubt all elements of RSS's response to our claims.

During the meeting we were deeply disappointed that RSS failed to provide any dollar figures in its response. This was despite our repeated insistence that RSS had 'all the time in the world' to respond to us – if they responded with a total package offer. RSS has failed to do what we clearly requested in our previous meeting.

We have advised RSS that despite some positive elements, its response is totally unsatisfactory and not worthy of even in-principle agreement. Our key point is that we can only consider agreement based on a response to a total package, which we lodged with them; not in line-by-line item responses that 'chip away' at the reasonable set of claims we seek. That being said, RSS has advised that our claims are 'no surprise' to LHNs and that an hourly rate is a feasible idea that RSS is costing.

### **What happens next?**

RDASA and AMA(SA) will consider the events of the meeting of 31 March 2021 before providing our official response to RSS. RSS has been left in no doubt that we believe their response to be deficient and that we consider the recent meeting as merely a preliminary, with a full package response (including a money offer) presumably to be presented by RSS after Easter. As a parallel exercise, an effort will be made to engage with RSS to redraft and simplify the current contract so that 'on the ground' compliance and understanding is dramatically enhanced. We will officially advise RSS on both matters as soon as possible after Easter.

Our written claim includes this opening statement:

Our claim offers LHNs the opportunity to begin a genuine cultural change journey. Our claim seeks to simplify arrangements, provide for budget certainty,

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build in attraction and retention incentives, and remove the barriers to the development of GP trust and collaboration with their LHN. Our claims aim to fix:

- unreasonable GP remuneration (particularly for the more remote locations)
- unsustainable opportunity cost to GP private practice
- interpretation and compliance complexity (includes arbitrary LHN refusals)
- administrative burden and cost (both GPs and LHNs)
- lack of GP training and support conditions
- lack of recognition of GP skills and contribution to LHNs (often to the disadvantage of the smooth running of their local practice and private patient responsibility)
- disincentive for local doctors to offer their services to LHNs (and over reliance of expensive locums which undermines quality, efficiency and continuity of care)
- lack of additional support to GPs working in more remote and professionally challenging locations, and
- disincentive to the recruitment and retention of skilled rural generalists (including Registrars) particularly to more remote regions.

We will continue to update you with progress. Please feel free to distribute this and other Updates to interested colleagues and throughout your networks. The more everyone is informed, the stronger our mandate to achieve success.

If you are not a member, please consider joining, by visiting the RDASA and AMA(SA) websites.

**To provide comment or feedback, or for more information about the contract negotiations, please contact:**

- RDASA: Dr Peter Rischbieth (Peter.Rischbieth@bridgeclinic.com.au) or Dr Scott Lewis (drscott@internode.on.net)
- AMA(SA): Dr Chris Moy (chrismoy@optusnet.com.au or president@amasa.org.au) or Dr Samantha Mead (CEO@amasa.org.au).

We look forward to providing further information about negotiations very soon.

Yours sincerely



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President



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