



AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC.
ABN 91 028 693 268

2021 LHN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS RESET

MEMBER UPDATE No. 4

19 May 2021

RSS FINALLY COMMUNICATES WITH US ON THEIR PROGRESS

Welcome to the fourth edition of this *Member Update*. We have promised to keep you informed via this *Update* about progress towards a replacement agreement with the Local Health Networks (LHNs) through our discussions with the Department for Health and Wellbeing's (DHW) Rural Support Services (RSS). The most recent Update (No.3) was distributed on 1 April 2021.

Last week, AMA(SA) and RDASA initiated contact with RSS because we were dismayed RSS had chosen not to act on our written request (made after our most recent, and unsatisfactory, meeting with RSS on 31 March), which was presented as follows:

'We request that we be kept abreast of RSS process, actions, progress and milestones towards RSS being in a position to invite us to a meeting only when a genuine full package response can be presented to us.'

After our contact last week, RSS provided the following advice:

- RSS has held separate executive level discussions with each LHN about the claims we lodged on 12 March 2021
- RSS is costing our claims
- RSS will be in touch with GPs to ensure what they call 'essential information' about contractual status is accurate
- RSS aims to fully respond to our claims around mid-June 2021.

We believe we had allowed RSS a reasonable amount of time to properly cost and develop implementation plans to match our claims.

However, the RSS's failure to communicate with us in the interim continues to suggest there are real deficits in its capacity to manage this process. It should also be noted that we have repeatedly emphasised the importance of RSS

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your AMA

your voice

your profession

communicating with and being responsive to us, to build trust and confidence with us on your behalf.

Meeting between RDASA President and Minister for Health

On 14 May 2021, Dr Peter Rischbieth met with Minister Stephen Wade. Dr Rischbieth expressed disappointment in the RSS delay in responding promptly to our claims and emphasised that this delay, combined with the lack of RSS communication about the contract discussions and contract extension, was of considerable concern in view of the worsening rural doctor workforce crisis across the state.

Dr Rischbieth will also formally correspond to the Minister that he and his government must support the contract process to resolve the current dire situation.

The status of your current contract

Please note that this information should not be regarded or acted upon as legal advice.

As you are aware, your contract with RSS is due to expire on 31 May 2021, as provided in the six-month extension from 30 November 2020.

In last week's conversation with RSS, we asked what RSS intended to do to avoid the chaotic circumstances that arose late last year when contracts were due to expire. We offered to help by ensuring members are properly informed.

RSS has since said it will consult with us about its intentions to extend GP contracts.

In the meantime, please note that whether or not you formally sign a contract extension, there is no change to your rights or obligations when performing your public work. Unless there is direction to stop at contract expiry, the contract continues to operate (because the parties, by their behaviour, are acting to extend the contract end-date each time the GP performs the public work).

What happens next?

We will wait for an invitation from RSS to a meeting – expected around mid-June – at which they must outline their fully costed, full package response to our claims. Anything less will be deemed to be unacceptable. Consultation and review on the RSS content will occur among the RDA(SA) and AMA(SA) executive. Members will be advised of the RSS response and our recommendations. As we have previously made clear, agreement will be extremely difficult if our claims are not met by RSS. **Our member mandate is clear: the issues are at such a crisis**

point that a substandard RSS offer is less acceptable than no agreement at all.

Please feel free to distribute this *Member Update* to interested colleagues and throughout your networks. The more everyone is informed, the stronger our mandate to achieve success. Please look out for Edition No. 5.

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

We welcome your input and feedback. To provide comments, or for more information about the negotiations, please contact:

- RDASA: Dr Peter Rischbieth (Peter.Rischbieth@bridgeclinic.com.au) or Dr Scott Lewis (scott@wudinamedical.com.au)
- AMA(SA): Immediate Past President Dr Chris Moy (chrismoy@optusnet.com.au) or Dr Samantha Mead (CEO@amasa.org.au or president@amasa.org.au).

We look forward to providing more information soon.

Yours sincerely



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