



Media release

Friday, 7 March 2014

Nurses and midwives fear major gaps in Opposition's health policy

The ANMF (SA Branch) has welcomed the release of the Liberal Party's health policy just a week from the March election, following its repeated calls for information throughout the week.

However, Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars, CEO ANMF (SA Branch), said the South Australian community should be deeply concerned by the gaps in the Opposition's policy document.

"Just a week out from the election and we have a policy document more closely that resembles a piece of Swiss cheese than it does a concrete plan for our entire health system," Ms Dabars said.

"The Liberal Party has been critical of many aspects of the current performance of the health system and plans for it in the future, but its policy announcements to date fail to address many of their own criticisms and concerns."

Ms Dabars pointed to the fact the Liberal Party has a position on the old RAH site, but does not have a policy for the new RAH.

"Given the questions that they have raised about the capacity of the new hospital to meet future demand and whether it will offer a full range of existing services, a lack of commitment in this area is concerning," she said.

Ms Dabars also said there were many questions as to how the policy would be implemented by a Liberal Government.

"The announcement of creation of hospital boards is without any detail. Will these new Boards be subject to the direction of the Minister (as was the case under the Brown and Olsen Governments) or not? If they are subject to direction how will this change local influence and control in a substantial way?"

"Hospital boards have been used in the past as a convenient way of passing the buck for decisions made by Governments but implemented at the local level."

Other important health policy issues still not clarified by the statement today include:

- What is the Opposition's policy in relation to the SA Health Care Plan released and reviewed by the current Government?
- Is the opposition committed to the planned upgrade of buildings and services already announced by the current government including redevelopments at Lyell McEwin and Modbury Hospitals, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Flinders Medical Centre and the Women's & Children's Hospital?



- Will the Opposition implement plans to upgrade country general hospitals at Whyalla, Mt Gambier, Berri and Pt Lincoln?
- Will all services currently provided in all hospital sites be maintained under a Liberal Government?
- What commitment will the Opposition give to continuing growth in funding to the health care system given increasing demand for services as the population both grows and ages?
- What specific commitments will the Opposition provide the staff of the SA Health system in relation to future workforce requirements, including the employment of graduate nurses and midwives in the system?
- Is the Opposition committed to continuing implementation of the 'Stepping Up' reforms of the mental health system including the recommendations from the Ernst Young review of that strategy in 2013?