



MEDIA RELEASE

BLACK ARMBANDS AT THE MERSEY

AMA Tasmania has just surveyed members in the NW of Tasmania to gauge their opinions on the impact of imposed changes to the hospitals in the NW (Burnie and Mersey). The NW survey highlights acute problems related to the lack of leadership with no onsite CEO, lack of consultation and communication plus the loss of clinical leadership within the Mersey. Doctors reported that the changes were announced and implemented precipitately, without consultation, and morale has fallen to the point where many are considering leaving.

Professor Haydn Walters, President of AMA Tasmania said “AMA Tasmania supports the need for reform of the Tasmanian Health system. However support remains conditional on changes being properly planned, properly resourced and carefully implemented to a transparent schedule. The Health Minister says that we are now in the implementation phase of the Future Health Plan. Feedback from members is that there is no implementation plan, substantial changes are adhoc and are occurring without due consultation. We are damaging the workforce, which is the essential resource. If this is the way of the future the AMA will need to reconsider its support.”

Dr Roger Watts, AMA Tasmania NW spokesman said “AMA members at the Mersey are losing confidence in the Health Minister and her department. The Minister said that changes would occur over many months with plenty of time to develop policy and plans for staff with close consultation between clinicians and administration. The reality is far from this. Medical staff at the Mersey have no confidence left in the reform process to date. AMA Tasmania NW Division is calling on all Mersey medical staff to wear black armbands to mourn the unnecessary damage of these apparently random and arbitrary changes on the NW community.” Dr Watts said that he will request staff to wear armbands until staff regains confidence.

Professor Haydn Walters said “AMA Tasmania will raise issues highlighted by the NW survey directly with the Minister in a scheduled meeting in August and resurvey all members in October. We will release a report card in November on the ability of the Health Department to manage the first six months of change. AMA support depends on Departmental performance and how these reforms are impacting directly Tasmanians.”

- Professor Walters will be available for interview at 9:45am Monday 23rd July, AMA State Office 147 Davy Street.
- Dr Roger Watts can be contacted for interview in the NW on 0400 988 071.