



Stat Report 2014/17

MSAV | VPA | AHP Annual Conference

Last week the MSAV, VPA and AHP held its first ever annual conference. The agenda was ambitious and list of speakers grand.

The conference began with a wide ranging discussion about the state of public health in Victoria. It was great to have Craig McGregor, Secretary of the Victorian Health Professionals Association (VHPA) and Paul Healy, Assistant Secretary of the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) take part in this debate, joining with Rosemary Kelly in outlining the challenges facing the public health system and members who work in it.

Issues around workloads and unpaid work are common across the health workforce in both the public sector and the private sector.

We heard from our industrial staff who talked about the current industrial landscape, our Job Reps Network and how the Union works to build stronger networks to increase members and our capacity to campaign on issues important to members. We also had a very informative session about bullying, discrimination and harassment; as well as provisions around returning to work from maternity/parental leave.

In the afternoon attendees heard from the three major political parties in Victoria about their policies for health and the kind of future they envisaged for healthcare. It was certainly an interesting session with Victorian Health Minister David Davis, Shadow Health Minister, Gavin Jennings, and the Greens' health spokesperson Colleen Hartland discussing issues within the health sector.

Our members articulated the major concerns of our professions such as the dwindling professional workforce and increase in allied health assistants, and the privatisation of public health services.

Importantly, Minister Davis said the Victorian Government does not support the Abbott government' proposed co-payments for GP services and hospital emergency department visits, and doesn't support the cuts to health in the federal budget. It was great to hear Labor and the Greens committing to no co-payments for hospital emergency department visits; as well as acknowledging the need to reinvest in healthcare, including preventative health.

The Health Minister committed to following up our concerns about workload issues and unpaid work; and breaches of contracts for the provision of pathology services to his attention. We also advised the Minister that we will be seeking his support to get copies of the contractual arrangements between public hospitals and private pathology providers, rather than us having to pursue the provision of these contractual matters through Freedom of Information requests and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

We used this opportunity to put the major parties on notice that we will be seeking their commitment to:

1. Restoring full funding to the Victorian healthcare system to recognise the investment

- needed in the health workforce, not just infrastructure;
2. Ensuring Victorians are not charged a co-payment for visits to Hospital emergency departments
 3. Halting the employment of allied health assistants until a full investigation into Victorian health outcomes has been completed given the introduction and subsequent expansion of allied health assistants in hospitals and community health centres.
 4. No contracting out or outsourcing of clinical services to the private and not-for-profit sectors.
 5. Considering the return of pathology services outsourced to private providers to the public sector
 6. Enforcing existing contractual deliverables under contracts with private pathology providers including on-site testing and turn-around times.
 7. Ensuring that our workplaces through proper staffing to guarantee workloads are fair and reasonable and eliminates duress and injury through excessive workloads.
 8. Redressing the current high levels of unpaid work performed by public health workers.

We will publish the responses we receive from each of the political parties, as well as the Minister's response to our concerns about workloads and private providers operating in public hospitals.

Check out the pictures from Annual Conference

Bust the Budget Rally

The Victorian Trades Hall Council is organising the **Bust the Budget rally on 12 June at 10:30am** to fight Tony Abbott's budget and to stand up for our social and health services, jobs, and a fair society. And your Union is actively supporting the rally.

We know that the Abbott Government budget compounds the cuts in Victoria by cutting up to \$50 billion from health and hospital funding, making it more difficult for states to make up the short fall in funding.

Clearly with such short falls in funding for health and hospitals, it will be the scientists, psychologists and pharmacists that will again face further job cuts to keep hospital and community health centres budgets balanced.

The Abbott Government's introduction of co-payments is a policy that will impact in two profoundly damaging ways: it will make Australians sicker and poorer; and it is the first deliberate step to dismantling Medicare, Australia's universal healthcare system.

As such the Union has endorsed the Bust the Budget rally and we strongly encourage you to join our contingent to tell the Abbott Government that we do not support attacks on health, social services, jobs and a fair society.

Rally Details

Date: 12 June

Time: 10:30am

Location: Victorian Trades Hall – Corner of Victoria and Lygon Streets

The Union will have a contingent at the rally and will be meeting at 10:15am at 62 Lygon St, Carlton before joining the rest of the rally at 10:30am

To get more information and to help promote the rally visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/699645873414347/>

Important Advice on Flu Vaccinations

The Union has received information from members about efforts by some of Victoria's health providers to force members to have flu vaccinations. In one circumstance the Union understands that the service is insisting members take the flu vaccine and if they refuse they have to state why and wear a mask in high risk areas.

Well here are the facts:

You cannot be forced to take the influenza vaccination and you do not need to state why you are refusing to take the vaccine. But if you feel it necessary to give a reason then all you need to say is that you don't want to take the vaccine.

It's very generous for health providers to offer the influenza vaccination free of charge but they cannot insist on you taking it – or require you to fill in a form stating why you are declining to have a flu shot

If you have any questions call the Union on 9623 9623.

Senate Inquiry into Australia's Innovation System

With a federal government that seems to have misplaced the importance of science to the future development of Australia, a landmark inquiry into Australia's innovation system has been secured by the ALP and the Australian Greens.

The Inquiry comes at a particularly important time as many of the solutions to the big challenges facing Australia will come from our science community and the innovation our science community generates. The Inquiry's terms of reference are very broad so as to capture the full breadth of the science community and its contribution to Australian life.

The Union is very clear about the importance of science to Australia, especially for the ongoing healthcare needs of all Australians, and will be making a submission to the Inquiry.

We strongly encourage individual members to make their own submission.

Submissions to the Inquiry close on 31 July 2014.

For more details about this important Inquiry and to make a submission visit:

http://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/Innovation_System

Preparing the Union submission

If you're interested in assisting the Union in preparing its submission to this Inquiry please contact Alex Schlotzer on 9623 9623 or at alexs@msav.org.au

Worth Reading: "Government shows muddled mental health priorities"

Despite widespread analysis of the federal budget, measures affecting mental health services have received little attention. But, like other aspects of the budget, there's serious concern about the lack of a coherent vision or plan behind the government's actions.

In a largely slashing budget, the government committed funding to a number of new initiatives in mental health, based on its election commitments:

- \$18 million over four years for a national centre for excellence in youth mental health, and
- \$14.9 million over four years for ten new headspace youth mental health centres.

These are in addition to the \$2.5 million for an e-health platform for young people over the next two years.

But, overall, we have a net loss of funding to mental health programs. This is mainly due to \$53.8 million being cut from the Partners in Recovery program. This program supports people with severe and persistent mental illness who have complex needs, and it helps their carers.

Read the full article by Anthony Jorm. Professorial Fellow and NHMRC Australia Fellow

at University of Melbourne, on The Conversation at:

<http://theconversation.com/government-shows-muddled-mental-health-priorities-27106>

“Tony Abbott is gutting science just when we need it most”

In an article titled ‘Burning the Science Books’, Ian Dunlop addresses the present dangers of the government’s refusal to acknowledge climate change and the need for all policy – economic or otherwise – to incorporate effective climate change practices.

The federal government is taking anti-science to new heights. Its scorched earth approach discards virtually everything not in line with narrow, free-market ideology, centred on sustaining Australia’s 20th century dig-it-up and ship-it-out economic growth model.

The full article can be read via: <http://cpd.org.au/2014/06/the-sydney-morning-herald-1-june-2014/>

‘Burning the Science Books’ can be downloaded at: <http://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ian-Dunlop-Burning-the-Science-Books.pdf>

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