



Australasian College for Emergency Medicine

Media Release

28 June 2019

Overcrowding

Overcrowding, bed block and ambulance ramping must not be the new 'normal' for hospital emergency departments

Overcrowding, bed block and ambulance ramping must not be the new 'normal' for hospital emergency departments in South Australia, says Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) President Dr Simon Judkins.

'There are real and persisting issues at all emergency departments in South Australia and they pose a risk to patient safety,' Dr Simon Judkins says.

ACEM has been in discussion with the SA Health Minister for some time about its concerns about overcrowding, bed block and ambulance ramping.

Our data shows these issues are prevalent across all jurisdictions, and are contributing to increasingly longer waits for patients in emergency departments. This is most acute for mental health patients, who are over-represented in all patients experiencing access block and those who spend longer than 24 hours in the emergency departments.

'Patients are experiencing longer and longer waits in South Australian emergency departments. We know that the longer a patient is blocked in an emergency department, the higher the likelihood of adverse patient outcomes,' Dr Judkins says.

'We are willing to work constructively towards a solution that is in the best interests of patients, but reports today that the SA Health Minister thinks the situation in emergency departments is 'nothing out of the ordinary' are alarming.

'We believe that no patient should spend longer than 24 hours in an emergency department – where it does occur, there should be mandatory reporting from the hospital executive to the Minister.'

ACEM is concerned about the inability of the SA hospital system to manage the increasing demands put on emergency departments and their staff each and everyday.

'The impact this has on the delivery of care to acutely unwell patients is significant and directly contributes to poor patient outcomes. The effects on staff, with increasing stress and impacts on career sustainability can also not be ignored.

'There should be nothing normal about a health system that is not resourced to provide safe care to patients', he said.

Related documents

[Mental Health in the Emergency Department Consensus Statement](#)

[The Long Wait \(report\)](#)

[Waiting times in the ED \(report\)](#)

ACEM Position Statements

[Overcrowding](#)

[Access \(Bed\) Block](#)

[Ambulance Ramping](#)

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