



ASMOF (NSW)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

20 February 2018

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Dr Tony Sara, President ASMOF NSW

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President's Report

Welcome to the ASMOF NSW Annual General Meeting for 2018.

On behalf of the NSW ASMOF Executive and Council I want to thank all staff for the amazing work they have done over the last year. I also want to acknowledge our NSW State Councilors and all members who make up this great union of ours.

I have always had high hopes for our union and I am continually amazed at what we achieve each year. We have proven that people will join a union if we take the high moral ground and advocate the issues that matter to members who are after all teaching hospital doctors – quality health care, patients' interests, and the members welfare.

And the results speak for themselves. For the first time in the history of our union we now have over 5000 members with over 8% membership growth in 2017.

We also achieved much on the industrial front and operationally.

We opened our new office, which I am sure we all agree is quite special. We undertook an internal review which showed that, whilst there is still work to be done we are well on track in making sure all our internal systems and processes and technology are up to scratch.

When NSW Health tried to cut members TESL accrual we fought back and have now ensured members TESL balances will be protected.

We successfully negotiated for staff who will transfer to the Northern Beaches Hospital - protecting conditions and ensuring there is a process for right of return.

We have negotiated four new enterprise agreements for members who work under the Fair Work Act.

As always one of the highlights for me was to present at the ASMOF/AMA DIT Awards night.

ASMOF supports the Awards because we believe it is important to highlight the excellence of the doctors and staff who support our profession by contributing their time, energy and skill to ensure that the next generation of doctors enjoy a world class level of teaching. The DIT Awards are a celebration of our profession and each year when I meet the finalists and winners I am reassured the future of our great hospital system is in good hands.

We continue to be part of the Last Drinks Coalition which seeks to tackle the issue of alcohol-fueled violence head-on, by challenging the 24/7 drinking culture that has permeated Australian society. We recently contributed to the submission to the NSW Independent Liquor & Gaming Authority review of the range of special conditions that have applied to 14 hotels and bars in Newcastle's CBD since 2008. These conditions have been successful in achieving an outcome of reducing alcohol related violence and continue to be strongly supported by the Last Drinks Coalition and most Newcastle business owners. The successful lockout and last drinks laws in place in the Newcastle CBD since 2008 are now the subject of a snap review after the Australian Hotels Association pressed the regulator to either revoke or vary them. We believe this review is a clear example of the undue influence of the alcohol lobby on NSW politics and policy.

But I am proud to say that our two most significant wins have been defeating the attempts of the NSW Government to privatise our public hospitals and in getting safe working hours for DiTs

Privatisation

This decision of the NSW to back down from privatising five public hospitals is a major victory for ASMOF.

In its nearly seven years of outsourcing and privatising public services, this is the first real defeat for the NSW Government. A major win for

unions and the community. And hopefully not the last.

JMO well-being and Safe working hours

But I want to spend some time on JMO well-being and safe working hours.

On 14 October 2017 the World Medical Association (WMA) updated the Declaration of Geneva to include the clause, “I will attend my own health, well-being, and abilities to provide care of the highest standard.”

This amendment is in recognition of increasing workloads and other occupational stresses and the potential adverse effects these factors can have on doctors, our health, and our ability to provide care of the highest standard. The new clause is an important step in breaking down assumptions that doctors should place patient-care before self-care. Such assumptions are not helpful if we want to address the problem of poor well-being in the medical profession.

The evidence is clear that doctors who feel better will make fewer mistakes and solve problems faster. Public investment in our careers will pay off with quality care.

But doctor’s health and wellbeing cannot just be the responsibility of individual doctors.

We need to focus on systemic cultural and organisational issues, and not individualise these problems. Staff shortages, excessive workloads, onerous on call and fatigue are all risks to our health and safety and to our patients’ health and safety.

ASMOF has been campaigning for safe working hours for junior doctors with a focus on reducing excessive work hours, increasing available resources and exploring new rostering initiatives as sensible prevention solutions that should form part of a broader range of wellbeing and support mechanisms for JMOs.

In June last year I told NSW Health that it was time to change the game when it came to improve JMO working conditions. But this is a great start.

The ASMOF/AMA Alliance Hospital Health Check Survey provided clear evidence that junior doctors are working excessive hours.

As part of the Award negotiations with NSW Health we proposed many sensible solutions and I am proud to say that NSW Health has listened releasing the JMO Wellbeing & Support Plan.

A key feature of the Plan is that the Government has agreed to implement two of our most important claims from Award negotiations, by amending the Employment Arrangements for Medical Officers in the NSW Public Health Service to guarantee the following:

- Employees must not be rostered for shift periods totaling more than 14 consecutive hours (inclusive of meal breaks and handover),
- and Rosters must be arranged so that there is a break after rostered shift periods of at least 10 hours.

This is an enormous victory for our members.

In addition to these wins the Government has committed to the following:

- The Ministry will action amendments to the mandatory reporting legislation to exempt treating practitioners from the mandatory reporting notification requirements in cases of impairment.
- The Ministry of Health will conduct a review of JMO rostering practices and undertake an investigation into unclaimed, unpaid hours worked and use the information gathered to review policy on safe working hours and un-rostered overtime.
- The Ministry will conduct an annual survey of JMOs aimed at gathering feedback on four key areas the quality of supervision, education, and training provided to JMOs, JMO welfare and wellbeing

- The Ministry will establish a new JMO Recruitment Governance Unit to improve recruitment practices.
- The Ministry and Medical Colleges will work together to develop strategies ensuring that discriminatory practices are eradicated from the JMO recruitment process.
- The Ministry, Medical Colleges, and LHDs will co-operate to provide more length-of-training contracts, rather than making JMOs re-apply every year or two.
- The Ministry will improve policies and support for maternity and paternity leave to reduce difficulties and inequity in accessing these important entitlements.
- The Ministry is partnering with the Blackdog Institute to develop measures to help encourage JMO wellbeing.
- The Ministry, HETI, and other health agencies will develop mentoring and other peer support schemes.
- The Ministry will develop a communication and education campaign to help you know where and how to get help when you need it.

These successes are the result of over two years of hard work, campaigning to win improvements for our JMO members.

Where to in 2018?

Office Accommodation

A major Campaign we are running in 2018 is the provision of office accommodation standards for Staff Specialists.

In November 2017 I wrote to the NSW Health Secretary because of a worrying trend in some hospitals to implement open plan workplaces (also known as shared-desk workplaces, hot desking, activity based working or agile working) for Staff Specialists.

We are concerned that in most instances cost is the main driver of open plan work arrangements with management taking a very short-term view of trying to fit more employees into available space whilst ignoring the research highlighting the negative effects of open plan workplaces.

As we stress in our letter to the Secretary attempts to force open plan arrangements on Staff Specialists breach the ASMOF Recommended Minimum Office Accommodation Standards and may also breach the Staff Specialists (State) Award and NSW Health's own Office Accommodation Policy.

This is an issue that we will not back down from.

In 2018 we will also be campaigning for gender equity. The driving factor in this campaign was being made aware of instances where female doctors were being asked about family plans during job interviews or were being told not to dare get pregnant or that jobs were "conditional" on not getting pregnant and even job offers being revoked (or attempted to be) after reporting pregnancy.

The Alliance

Representing junior doctors has also provided a wonderful opportunity for ASMOF and the AMA to build on that achievement by establishing a strong partnership referred to as the Alliance which has brought benefits to members and both organisations. In 2018 we will renew this Alliance with the aim of making the Alliance stronger and better placed to build on the great wins we have made for our JMO colleagues and members.

Finally, I am proud to announce that my colleague and friend Dr Pesi Katrak, who is also a long serving ASMOF Councillor, was awarded an AM in the latest Australia Day honours list. for significant service to rehabilitation medicine as a practitioner, to medical education and professional organisations, and to the Zoroastrian community.

Dr Tony Sara

President ASMOF NSW