



# AUSTRALIAN MILITARY MEDICINE

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# **Australian Military Medicine Association**

## **Statement of Objectives**

The Australian Military Medicine Association is an independent, professional scientific organisation of health professionals with the objectives of:

- promoting the study of military medicine
- bringing together those with an interest in military medicine
- disseminating knowledge of military medicine
- publishing and distributing a journal in military medicine
- promoting research in military medicine

Membership of the Association is open to doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics and anyone with a professional interest in any of the disciplines of military medicine.

The Association is totally independent of the Australian Defence Force.

## President's Message

Nader Abou-Seif

An old Chinese curse reads: 'May you live in interesting times.' The Australian military medicine community is certainly doing that at present. The recent Defence Reform Program (DRP) has provided another challenge in reorganisation for those in the ADF medical community. The line between efficient leanness and difficulty in mobilising adequate resources is a fine one which must be drawn carefully. Those involved in this challenge have a difficult task and we wish them well in their efforts. The one thing of which we are certain is that the expectations of the provision of high level medical care will remain whether in an operational or peacetime role. Also, the traditional commitment to excellence by all those in the ADF Health Services will remain their strength.

As we approach next month's AMMA Conference (29-31 August in Melbourne), we look forward to seeing this commitment to excellence on display in the papers to be presented. As in previous years, the program is a varied one which deals with a broad range of subjects ranging from historical to current operational to future aspects. This year, too, we have a large occupational health and safety focus which will provide an overview of what is

being done, and what can be done to enhance the conditions of those for whom we care.

I would encourage you all to consider a trip to Melbourne this August to attend what promises to be an outstanding meeting. The conference will also provide an opportunity to both catch up on old friendships and make new ones among those in the military medicine community.

You will all soon be receiving a questionnaire asking your opinion on a number of issues about the Association and how to improve it so that it may better serve your needs. I strongly encourage you to fill in the questionnaire and return it to the AMMA Secretariat so that we can evaluate the information and try to make AMMA an Association which truly meets the need of its members. As President, and on behalf of the Council, I hope to make AMMA as 'user-friendly' an Association as possible and your input is essential to help us achieve this goal.

Once more, I encourage your attendance at this year's National Conference and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible during the last three days of August.

## Editorial

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### How purple will be the white coat?

Russ Schedlich

The forces of change impacting on the Australian Defence Force, and in particular the Defence Health Service, are making themselves felt. These changes are significant, and will produce a significant change in the way health care is delivered to the Services.

In one of the early editions of *Australian Military Medicine*, Tony Austin wrote an article entitled 'Would that the white coat were purple'.<sup>1</sup> In this article, Austin argued for a much more integrated Health Service, along the Canadian Defence Force model, with personnel being appointed to positions across Service lines based on their abilities, and with a minimisation of single Service rivalries allowing greater cooperation for the benefit of the whole Defence Force. The proposals for health made by the De-

fence Reform Program have embraced this concept wholeheartedly.

There are many in Defence who subscribe to the view that health is health is health, whether you are in Navy, Army or Air Force. There are others who are not so convinced, and argue that there are important single Service differences that demand some autonomy and uniqueness of the single Service health elements.

In considering this issue, it is vital to recognise the difference between *public* health and the provision of *individual* health care. The Defence Force is involved in both, but the characteristics of each are completely different.

In the provision of individual health care, there are few obvious differences between the