



Signing off

In the words of Heraclitus, "Nothing endures like change"

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This is my final report as president of APHA after six years in this position. Looking back, the years have gone quickly and the challenges have been many. Through this time the association has fought several new policy decisions including changes to the Medicare levy surcharge; the abolition of the means testing of the private health insurance rebate; followed closely by the indexation of the rebate.

Over the last several years we have seen the rise of perverse incentives which drive public hospitals to actively seek out and admit privately insured patients – an unsustainable strategy as time will tell. We have fought and been successful in increasing private hospital representation on government bodies and driving more funds for training into the private sector.

Private Hospital Week and Mental Health Week have been excellent new initiatives by the association that showcase the enormous work the private hospital sector does in Australia and provide the opportunity for us to reflect on our achievements.

Throughout it all, nothing has been too much trouble for the staff of APHA. All of them have worked hard on policies, submissions, communications and public relations, with the aim of improving the position of private hospitals. I would like to thank all of the staff who worked at APHA throughout my tenure as president for their tireless dedication to the work of the association and the industry alike.

As an industry, we will face many challenges ahead. Changes in the private health industry will need to be monitored; state and federal governments will continue to face budgetary pressures in healthcare spending; and ensuring

we have a workforce to meet the rapidly ageing and growing population in Australia is potentially one of our greatest challenges over the next decade.

But the future for the industry is also promising. Australia has an excellent balanced healthcare system, one of the best in the world, and one that APHA has fought to maintain. Participation in health insurance remains strong and the demographics of the population will drive further investment and growth in our sector for many decades to come. In the words of Leo Tolstoy, "The strongest of all warriors are these two – Time and Patience".

Speaking of time and patience, congratulations to Michael Roff, executive director of APHA, on reaching two decades of service – a wonderful achievement that demonstrates his excellent loyalty to the organisation. Personally, I have very much enjoyed working with Michael over these last six years in my time as president. Together, we have faced some difficult challenges and met with some colourful characters, but through it all he has been a great companion and a true friend. We are very fortunate to have someone of Michael's calibre leading our industry association and I wish him all the best in the future.

Finally, I thank the members of APHA council and board with whom I have worked closely throughout the six years and wish the incoming council and board the very best. I know they will continue the good work of this association and I remind them of the words of Andy Warhol, "They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself". 