

Ministers fail on credit cards

DANIEL WILLS
STATE POLITICAL EDITOR

PREMIER Jay Weatherill has criticised his own Cabinet for a "simply inexcusable" failure to meet a promise of releasing taxpayer-funded credit card statements monthly, after an Advertiser audit found two-thirds of the ministry hadn't made a report since Christmas.

Mr Weatherill announced an overhaul of expenses reporting in 2013, declaring "the lack of trust and faith in politics" was "the biggest crisis facing governments".

The change requires ministers to deliver monthly updates

TIME FOR DISCLOSURE

Who last reported when:
June 2015: Education and Child Development Minister Susan Close.
Oct 2015: Health Minister and Treasurer Jack Snelling.
Nov 2015: Climate Change Minister Ian Hunter, Youth Minister Zoe Bettison.
Dec 2015: Premier Jay Weatherill, Defence Industries Minister Martin

Hamilton-Smith, Employment Minister Kyam Maher.
Jan 2016: Tourism Minister Leon Bignell, Local Government Minister Geoff Brock, Transport and Infrastructure Minister Stephen Mullighan.
Feb 2016: Attorney-General John Rau.
Never: New ministers Peter Malinauskas and Leesa Vlahos.

on taxpayer-funded credit cards and travel and mobile phone expenses for themselves, staff and departmental chiefs.

Analysis of the statements shows 10 of the 14 ministers have failed to publish any expenses this calendar year. Edu-

cation and Child Development Minister Susan Close hasn't released an update since June.

Neither of the two new ministers sworn in during January's reshuffle, Peter Malinauskas and Leesa Vlahos, have revealed any spending.

Attorney-General John Rau is the most up-to-date minister, and has published spending up to February.

Tourism Minister Leon Bignell, often criticised for his travel and dining bills, is one of the better reporters and most recently released his credit card statements in January.

Mr Weatherill, whose statements were last updated in De-

ember, said it was not good enough.

"The current delays in reporting are simply inexcusable," he said yesterday. "I issued a clear directive to all ministerial offices, including my own, to disclose information in a timely manner."

"I accept that it is not good enough and I want to see significant improvement in reporting. The policy is about repairing trust in our political system. Delays in reporting undermine this."

The system was a major change in the way taxpayer-funded travel and expenses are declared, for the first time re-

vealing details long held secret.

The move has led to controversy over some ministerial expenses on dinner and travel, but State Government sources say the threat and experience of shame has cut back on waste.

It still draws Opposition criticism for failing to include all expense details, including items paid for at dinners.

The Premier said: "We are working on strengthening our policy to include more information and to ensure greater consistency in reporting."

Opposition treasury spokesman Rob Lucas said ministers were not taking their rhetoric about transparency seriously.

Pathology SA chief sacked after cancer diagnosis gaffe

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Central Adelaide Health Network chief executive Julia Squire said she had been unable to get "complete clarification on exactly what has occurred" since news broke.

She said the estimate of about 100 affected patients "feels about right", but had to be checked.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality will conduct an independent review, at the request of SA Health, to examine testing standards and the care and attention given to patients.

Mr Snelling was unaware of the scandal until approached for comment the day before publication and accused SA Pathology of misleading him and the public in a "cover-up".

A fortnight ago, SA Pathology released an obtuse media statement on its website about "improved testing", stating that recent PSA (prostate-specific antigen) results had been "highly accurate and reliable in the core range" but it had "moved to improve values below 0.15ug/L".

Mr Snelling said he didn't "have an enormous amount of confidence in what I've been told".

"I don't think anyone reading that release on the website would think for a moment that it was reporting something on the scale of what we've seen," Mr Snelling said yesterday.

"It is just simply unacceptable for me to be finding information about things on this sort of scale from journalists, rather than my department. I'm very, very angry about it."

"It was incredibly distressing to some of our patients and should have been briefed up to me. These sorts of cover-ups are unacceptable."

"When they do occur, we'll take appropriate action."

REACH FOR THE SNELLING SALTS - MISHAPS UNDER JACK'S WATCH

PROSTATE CANCER BUNGLE

SA Pathology executive director Ken Barr, far right, is sacked after the *Sunday Mail* revealed about 100 men had been falsely diagnosed with prostate cancer, and a review is launched. Health Minister Jack Snelling said: "These things are very rare, but when they do happen we take decisive action".



PRESSURE: Jack Snelling.

TRANSFORMING HEALTH ROW

In reaction to Federal Budget cuts the State Government announces the Transforming Health plan in October 2014. The government says the plan will deliver more cost-effective services by creating specialist hospitals and directing patients to the place where they can get faster and better treatment. The plan, which proposes to close Hampstead and the Repatriation General Hospital while downgrading smaller hospitals and increasing services at major hospitals including the RAH, is met with criticism from many within the medical fraternity including senior clinicians. As revealed in *The Advertiser* last month senior

doctors from Noarlunga, Lyell McEwin and Modbury hospitals wrote letters protesting the Transforming Health changes and warning Mr Snelling the plan posed an increased risk to patients. Days later, *The Advertiser* also revealed Modbury Hospital emergency department clinical director Dr Dewald Behrens resigned in frustration about the downgrading of Modbury Hospital.

PATIENT RECORD CONCERN

Doctors slam the controversial \$422 million electronic patient record system intended for the new Royal Adelaide Hospital and say it must be scrapped because

IT WAS LIKE BEING ON DEATH ROW

At least 100 patients given false positive cancer results.

It puts patient lives at risk. The system has been in use at Port Augusta for two years. *The Advertiser* obtained a letter from the Flinders and Far North Doctors Association to SA Health chief executive David Swan and Mr Snelling which outlined 37 separate failures within the Enterprise Patient Administration System. Doctors said it was so bad that staff had given up on reporting its problems. SA Health said: "The implementation of EPAS has led to substantially reduced rates of medication prescription and administration errors, faster location of patient information and improved continuity of patient care."

SPYING SCANDAL

Thirteen clinicians are caught spying on the medical records of Cy Walsh, accused of murdering his father and former Adelaide Crows coach Phil Walsh. *The Advertiser* reveals allegations

private security contractors regularly spy on patient records. The Government reveals two clinicians have been sacked for snooping. Mr Snelling said: "The vast majority of SA Health staff do the right thing and handle this information appropriately."

CHEMOTHERAPY BLUNDER

The Advertiser reveals 10 patients at the RAH and Flinders received only half their chemotherapy doses due to a typographical error. The patients had acute myeloid leukaemia. Mr Snelling said: "Incidents such as this are incredibly rare."

PRIVACY BREACH

An investigation determines cameras hidden in smoke detectors that spied on SA Pathology staff were inappropriate but had not broken any laws. Mr Snelling said the decision "seems to show pretty poor judgment" by Mr Barr.



ANYONE WITH ANY CONCERNS SHOULD CALL SA PATHOLOGY ENQUIRIES ON 8222 3000

Mr Snelling said the Government must be "open and frank" about its mistakes.

SA Pathology was the focus of another scandal last year, when hidden cameras were used to spy on staff. A review found they were inappropriate, but no laws were breached.

At the time, Mr Snelling said there had been poor judgment by management.

The health department has also been under intense scrutiny after it was revealed the

private records of patients, including accused murderer Cy Walsh, were hacked by clinicians. That case was also brought to public attention only by media reporting.

The Advertiser also first revealed in August that 10 patients at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre had received only half their required chemotherapy doses due to a mistake.

SA Health chief executive David Swan yesterday said he

was "very concerned that patients have been led to believe they may have prostate cancer by false readings" and "it is clear even at this stage there have been a number of issues that SA Pathology has not reported or managed effectively".

Anyone with any concerns should call SA Pathology Enquiries on 8222 3000.

Opposition health spokesman Stephen Wade said Mr Snelling had "clearly lost control of his own depart-

ment" and was regularly "kept in the dark about problems in our health system".

Duncan Basheer Hannon partner Patrick Boylen said the affected patients could have grounds for a class action against SA Pathology to recover medical costs and compensate for suffering.

"There is potential negligence action there against SA Pathology," he said. "There appears to be something like 100 (people affected)."

One patient who received a false positive test said he went through "hell" and it took weeks before he was cleared.

"For 30 days I felt like I was on death row," he said.

Dr Sutherland said a positive result might mean a patient went on to have further treatment which could produce side effects.

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Push to get on with the business of cutting stamp duty

DANIEL WILLS

STAMP duty for first home buyers should be eliminated in the State Budget to retain and attract young people to SA as the next step in tax reform, the development industry says.

The Property Council's sub-

mission on the State Budget credits the nation-leading move in last year's Budget to end stamp duty for businesses with increasing the SA's rate of jobs growth and says further steps should be taken on June 23. SA grants for first home-owners buying existing homes

were abolished in 2014, but the State Government has kept concessions for people buying off the plan CBD apartments.

It also offers up to \$15,000 for first home buyers building a house. SA has about 6200 first home buyers each year, and ending stamp duty for all of

them would cost about \$100 million per year. The Budget is on track for a \$355 million surplus this year.

Property Council of Australia SA executive director Daniel Gannon said eliminating residential stamp duty would make the tax system more ef-

ficient and slow the "brain drain" to other states. "Stamp duty is a major disincentive in the economy, and for first home owners trying to get into the property market," he said.

Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis announced business stamp duty would be phased out over

three years, while the Opposition instead called for payroll tax and Emergency Services Levy cuts.

Opposition treasury spokesman Rob Lucas said new tax cuts should be based on detailed studies of which would create the most jobs.