

Achievements and challenges acknowledged at President's Cocktail Party

The annual President's Cocktail Party held in May was the ideal occasion to farewell Dr Michael Gannon and thank him for his drive and commitment as AMA (WA) President over the past two years.

For Dr Gannon, the event was an occasion to thank AMA (WA) members, staff, well-wishers, the media and his family for their support and encouragement during his time in the job.

The outgoing President spoke of several highlights during the past 24 months including the AMA (WA)'s successful opposition to the proposed merger of MDA National and MIGA, the promotion of immunisation as a core public health issue, the growth of new relationships with organisations such as the RAC and the increased literacy achieved in the mental health sector.

"Rewarding the people who work in



WA Minister for Health, the Hon John Day spoke of achievements and challenges.

the mental health space, rewarding General Practice, and rewarding those less fashionable areas of preventative healthcare needs to be a priority, even if it's uncomfortable for those of us who are specialists in big hospitals."

Dr Gannon once again referred to the government's colossal mistake of

allowing a third medical school in the state.

"It's about the medical training pipeline which I believe so strongly in. I really do lament that there will be hundreds of people without a career path now," he said.

"The rumours doing the rounds are that the Turnbull Government will announce the Murray Darling Medical School during this election campaign. I really hope they don't.

"What I think we need to do as a profession is have a grown-up conversation about reducing medical student numbers because it should be set to community demand."

Taking the podium just before Dr Gannon was WA Minister for Health, the Hon John Day. This was Mr Day's very first attendance at an official AMA function, in his second time as Health Minister, and he acknowledged that it was "great to be back".

"It has been a 15-year interval. I can't say I ever expected to be back in the role...but it's certainly one that I am very much enjoying after just six weeks."

Mr Day then referred to a recent editorial in *Medicus* which suggested that the new Health Minister would find a very

different health service to the one he left a decade and a half ago.

"I must say the changes are remarkable. And I am certainly impressed by them in many respects," he said.

Mr Day acknowledged that there were some challenges facing the health system.



AMA (WA) President Dr Michael Gannon addresses the room.

"We do have a higher cost structure in Western Australia and that does have a substantial effect on our State Budget. We are seeking to make changes to address those issues by certainly maintaining the high quality of patient care but trying to ensure that we do have a sustainable system."

Mr Day also flagged a couple of upcoming significant changes such as the Perth Children's Hospital, which he said was expected to be open to patients before the end of the year, and the establishment of the five Health Service Boards from 1 July.

Listening on at the State Reception Centre at Fraser's were some of the best known faces in state politics, health and medical education including former Liberal Senator Dr Alan Eggleston, Director General of Health Dr David Russell-Weisz, Professor Lyn Beazley AO, WA Road Safety Commissioner Kim Papalia, Fair Work Australia Commissioner Danny Cloghan, Profs Paul Johnson and Wendy Erber from UWA, Profs Deborah Terry and William Hart from Curtin University and Prof Shirley Bowen from Notre Dame. ■