

MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon **David Hawker** MP
Federal Member for Wannon



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ABSENCE OF MRI RISKING LOCAL LIVES

The Federal Government's refusal to grant a licence for a Medical Resource Imaging (MRI) machine in the South West is killing local patients, Federal Member for Wannon, David Hawker, said today.

Mr Hawker's comments come after a leading radiologist warned that large numbers of Computerised Tomography (CT) scans are being performed in cases where an MRI would be safer, exposing patients to an extremely high dose of carcinogenic ionizing radiation.

Clinical Professor Richard Mendelson from the University of WA said that as many as a third of CT scans performed in Australia are unnecessary, noting the phenomenal growth in the number of scans by 10% per year.

"These devastating new facts show that the absence of an MRI in the South West is not just inconveniencing local patients, it is actually threatening their lives," Mr Hawker said.

"An abdominal CT scan is the equivalent of between 1000 and 2000 chest X-rays – that's an extremely high level of exposure to ionizing radiation that would not be necessary if local patients had better access to an MRI, which does not produce any ionizing radiation," he said.

Associate Professor Richard Fox, a physicist and emeritus consultant at the Royal Perth Hospital, has stated that to the best of his knowledge, "we are killing a significant number of people each year as a result of radiology".

Mr Hawker is increasing pressure on the Federal Health Minister to grant a licence for an MRI in the South West in light of these new facts.

"The Rudd Labor Government must stop treating rural and regional residents as second class citizens. People in areas like Warrnambool, Hamilton and Portland have just as much right to up-to-date life saving medical technology as those who live in urban areas," he said.

Please note:

Computerised Tomography (CT) is a scan performed using an x-ray machine, which is linked to a computer.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) uses a very powerful magnet and radio waves to produce images of any part of the body. It is safe as no X-rays are used to make these images. Images are taken in layers and are of a high quality.

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