

# Foreword

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Among significant events that affected the health system during 2001 are the process of decentralisation of health services, greater attention to proper corporate governance especially with regard to financial reporting, and the increasingly profound impact of HIV/AIDS.

Decentralisation of health care, the treasured policy goal of health services being managed by the sphere of government closest to the people, is, albeit slowly, becoming a reality to South Africans. The 2001 South African Health Review reflects on this process of transformation, including the necessary enabling legislation and funding of local government for health care delivery at this level.

A series of chapters commissioned for this Review, based on qualitative research with managers working in the health system, provide insights to some of the day-to-day pleasures and frustrations in managing the South African health service. Their 'voices' bear testimony, often evocatively, to the reality of managing services in an environment characterised by transformation. These voices provide health policy makers and senior managers with the opportunity to pause and listen to the concerns of health workers, who are the health system's most important resource.

Many health sector developments during 2001 were overshadowed, at least in the media, by the contested nature of our response to HIV/AIDS. Understanding that HIV/AIDS is but one of the important priority programmes in a comprehensive health care system, the Review singles out financing of HIV/AIDS and implementation of the national HIV/AIDS and STD strategic plan for comment.

Providing an informative and reliable review of progress in the health sector year-by-year is a demanding task. It would indeed be impossible without the assistance provided by numerous health workers who although overburdened by the day-to-day responsibilities of providing quality health care, still managed to pause and reflect on the important questions that the Review sought to answer. The Board of Trustees of the Health Systems Trust is indebted to all those individuals who gave of their precious time with such good grace. We also thank the many researchers, writers and reviewers, as well as the staff of the Health Systems Trust who have contributed to the 2001 SAHR.



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Chairperson, Board of Trustees

