

Dear committee,

As a sleep researcher I am passionate about ensuring all Australians obtain adequate sleep. Sleep is a fundamental biological need and virtually every aspect of our physiology is impacted by inadequate sleep.

Inadequate sleep is estimated to cost around \$66 billion, with a majority of these costs being the result of a loss of wellbeing. The causes of inadequate sleep are diverse, and include sleep disorders and shift working schedules. Critically, around 40% of Australian adults experience inadequate sleep. Individuals suffering from inadequate sleep are more likely to have motor vehicle accidents, experience difficulties in learning, decision making, memory consolidation and performance and have poorer physical and mental health outcomes.

While inadequate sleep can affect everyone, people living in remote and rural areas and those within low socio-economic areas may be more vulnerable to the effects of inadequate sleep due limited access to resources such as specialised sleep physicians. Currently, the waitlist to see a public sleep physician in regional areas can be 12 months or longer. Patients that are seen by a sleep physician are also likely to only be a fraction of individuals who are experiencing inadequate sleep, as many do not seek medical advice. There is a need for the education, training and professional development of healthcare workers in the diagnosis, treatment and management of individuals experiencing inadequate sleep and sleep disorders.

It is also vital that there are guidelines in place to improve safety and productivity in the workplace, particularly within industries that involve shift work. There is ample evidence demonstrating how shift work can lead to poorer work performance and increased risks of incidents and accidents. Schedules involving shift work should minimise disruption to the circadian and sleep-wake systems and allow for adequate restorative sleep. Workers also need to have a greater understanding into how to optimise their sleep between working hours and the appropriate use of stimulants to promote alertness during shifts.

Finally, while there is an increase in public awareness into the importance of sleep, there is still a need to educate all Australians about the benefits of obtaining restorative, adequate sleep. It is also critical that this information comes from reliable sources that are supported and endorsed by sleep clinicians and sleep researchers within Australia.

Sincerely,

Gemma Paech, Ph.D.