

Dear Senate Committee,

RE: International medical students unable to get internship positions.

My name is Ms Ines Dian PRASIDHA. I am an international student from Indonesia. I am currently studying in The University of Sydney's Medical Program as a Full-Fee Paying International Student. This is my first year in the medical program and I will graduate in 2012.

I am concerned with the priorities of both The University of Sydney's and New South Wales Health for the well-being international medical students.

As the NSW government has outlined, by 2012 there would be approximately 800 internship positions available IF it is FULLY FUNDED by the Federal Government. This is in contrast to the approximately 1100 students who would be graduating in 2012. This would result in a shortfall of 300 places at least.

This would represent a problematic situation for us, international medical students. International medical students are paying the full costs of medical program, without even any form of subsidy or concessions from the government. NSW Health has this year made a decision to apply 'priority listings' to the allocation of internship positions upon graduation. This listing basically means that international students are the last to be offered internship positions. This policy by NSW Health would be adding salt to the wound. This notification was not made known to us or implemented when we accepted the offer to study in the medical program.

This 'priority listings' clearly states that internship positions would not be guaranteed for international students and international students would be last in the list to be offered an internship position. This problem is only further compounded by the sudden increase in medical student intakes by current and new universities, as well as interstate medical students competing for the limited internship places.

An internship place is crucial and necessary for any medical student. It is part of the core training of a medical doctor. No medical institution in the world would accept a medical student who had not done their internship placement. Furthermore, it would bring ridicule to the Australian medical system that international students are not properly and fully trained. It is unheard of a doctor not having completed an internship position upon graduation.

Australia has promoted and prided itself as a leading tertiary educational hub around the world. By not permitting international medical students to complete their full training as a Doctor would severely put doubts for future students and tarnish the reputation of Australia being a premier tertiary educational hub. Complicated and misleading statements by NSW Health have only complicated the matter.

The notion of 'priority listings' seem to go against the idea of meritocracy, in which Australia values and teachings had been based on. The basis in which entry to medical program offered by Universities in Australia has been greatly dependant on the marks attained in either Graduate School Admission Test (GAMSAT) or Medical College Admission Test (MCAT).

Furthermore, clinical placement (attachment to hospital while still a student) by my university and many other Australian universities are done on meritocracy as well, based heavily on GAMSAT/MCAT scores and interview scores. This sudden implementation of 'priority listings' would mean that almost certainly those international students who even though attain exceptional grades would not be able to get an internship place as compared to other students in the 'priority listings' who obtain mediocre or even borderline grades. This would not serve the best interest of the Australia community as they would be deprived of such outstanding doctors.

I hope the Senate Committee would be able to investigate and provide some form of assurance for the interests of international medical students with regards to internship placements. Such issues should not be on the forefront of our minds as the medical program is challenging enough.

If you would like me explain further or clarify matters, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Ines Dian PRASIDHA