

International Medical Students Society
The Australian National University
Frank Fenner Building 42
Canberra ACT 0200

August 13, 2009

To the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee,

With regards to the Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students, the topic of internship places for international medical graduates should be addressed.

We are writing on behalf of the International Medical Students Society at the Australian National University. Enrolment at Australian medical schools has almost doubled in the last 6 years. However, internship places for medical graduates have not increased at a similar rate. This places medical graduates in an difficult position because all medical graduates must perform a one year internship to become fully qualified as a medical practitioner in Australia. State governments have taken action to ensure internship places for domestic medical graduates, but not for international medical graduates.

As you are aware, Australia faces a serious shortage of doctors across the country. International medical graduates from Australian universities can help rectify this shortage. They are trained to an Australian standard and understand the health issues specific to Australia. The current policy of recruiting foreign trained doctors, particularly those from developing countries where the same education standards do not apply, can potentially decrease the quality of health care given to Australian citizens. 63 million dollars is being spent by the Council of Australian Governments on recruiting foreign trained doctors over the next four years while fully Australian qualified medical graduates receive nothing. Delaying the appropriate action to ensure that international medical graduates have an internship opportunity in Australia takes away their ability to remain in Australia and

provide much needed health services to this country.

We believe that the non-guarantee of internship places to international students adversely effects the reputation of Australian universities. Australia is a major exporter of education, but the universities of this country are already experiencing the effects of poor planning for completion of education for international medical graduates. Many Canadian students, who make up a substantial proportion of the international medical students in Australia, are now preferring to study medicine at universities in Ireland and the Caribbean, where they know they will able to complete their training according to that country's standards. We feel that for a country that so desperately needs doctors and has an income of almost 100 million dollars each year from international medical student tuition, Australia must make a greater effort to provide a complete and internationally competitive medical education. If international students are considered a risk due to the likelihood that they will return to their home countries, then perhaps consider a bonded internship scheme in which there is a contractual agreement to work in Australia after the completion of post graduate training. This could be similar in structure to the bonded rural medical places for Australian students. We feel that many students will gladly agree to such a scheme in order to guarantee the completion of their training.

We urge the senate committee to think of the future, both of Australian health care and of the reputation of Australia's universities. Failure to act quickly will adversely effect the Australian healthcare system for years to come.

We thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely yours,

Jonathan Storrar B.Sc.
1st year medical student,
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and

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