



PRESIDENT

**Dr Genevieve Goulding**  
MBBS (UNSW), FANZCA, FAICD

June 6, 2014

Senator Sue Boyce  
Chair  
Community Affairs Legislation Committee  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: [community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator

**Re: Inquiry into the Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014**

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission in relation to the above inquiry.

The Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA or "College"), which includes the Faculty of Pain Medicine, is committed to high standards of clinical practice in the fields of anaesthesia and pain medicine. ANZCA is the education and training body responsible for the postgraduate medical training programs and continuing professional development in anaesthesia and pain medicine for Australia, New Zealand and parts of Asia.

ANZCA understands that the intent of the above bill is to abolish Health Workforce Australia (HWA) and provides for transitional arrangements, including the transfer of assets, liabilities, interests in land, records and instruments to the Commonwealth, and the transfer of functions and programs to the Department of Health.

In establishing Health Workforce Australia (HWA) the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recognised that without strategic and coordinated reform, the ability to balance health workforce demand with health workforce supply would not be met and the challenges would not be overcome. There are obvious social, safety, economic and education implications if such a balance is not achieved. COAG recognised that reforms must be national and large-scale and that they must cut across jurisdictional, sectorial and professional boundaries.

These arguments for a unique entity to undertake this role still apply to this day.

ANZCA is concerned that subsuming these activities within the Department of Health may result in health workforce matters not receiving the high priority that they deserve. Such an outcome would be unacceptable to ANZCA. This is particularly so when the imperative to create a health workforce able to meet the current and future healthcare needs of all communities has never been greater.

During the four years that HWA has been in operation there has been a marked improvement in the understanding of workforce issues within the overall Australian healthcare environment. Meaningful data have been more freely available and shared within the sector, leading to greater capacity for policy makers and clinicians to have robust discussions about critical workforce issues.

It is vital that a national coordinated approach to the collection and analysis of workforce data continues. This must include iterative workforce model updating as new data come to hand. HWA has highly skilled staff working in this area and it is important that any proposed new workforce unit within the Department of Health is funded at a level that ensures personnel of this caliber can be employed. It is clear that failure to adequately plan for the transition of this key function could harm the capacity of the health sector to undertake workforce planning for years to come.

ANZCA has greatly appreciated the opportunity to engage with HWA during its brief history on a range of issues of strategic importance to the College in helping to meet the healthcare needs for Australia into the future. This was particularly so over the past year with respect to the proposal for a National Medical Training Advisory Network (NMTAN), and prior to this in relation to health workforce modelling for the medical workforce generally and anaesthesia and pain medicine specifically. The College has anticipated an ongoing role, providing input to future workforce modelling and policy initiatives.

Health Ministers agreed that HWA should establish the NMTAN in response to the findings of *Health Workforce 2025, Doctors, Nurses and Midwives (HW2025)* which found that:

- Poor co-ordination of medical training was contributing to a lengthening of the time taken to produce independently practicing specialists, as well as projected oversupply in some areas and undersupply in others.
- There was a reduction in the number of generalists due to a growing trend towards specialisation and sub-specialisation.
- There were lost opportunities to rectify the geographical maldistribution of the workforce.
- There was an over-reliance on overseas trained doctors.

ANZCA supports a coordinated national effort to bring together all relevant stakeholders to improve medical training and provide a more planned approach to medical workforce across the country. ANZCA recognises that NMTAN is an ambitious concept. However, we welcome this initiative as a necessary mechanism to balance the needs of the community for quality healthcare with the training requirements of doctors to meet these needs.

ANZCA is unclear as to the status of NMTAN in light of the budget announcement to abolish HWA. We are strongly supportive of the network. ANZCA would be greatly concerned if, as part of the current budget measures, this network was also abolished.

Thank you for your consideration of these important workforce issues as part of the deliberations regarding the abolition of HWA. Should you require any further information, please contact Jonathon Kruger, General Manager, Policy

Kind Regards

Genevieve Goulding  
President