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A small, square box containing a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'J.E.'.

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Standing Committee on Education and Employment  
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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Inquiry into the Higher Education Support Amendment  
(Asian Century) Bill 2013**

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak representative body for the 17,000 medical students that attend the 18 medical schools across Australia. We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment regarding the *Higher Education Support Amendment (Asian Century) Bill 2013*.

AMSA believes that OS-HELP is an important initiative that empowers students to obtain a broader and more global educational experience whilst enrolled at university. As such, AMSA supports items in this Bill that increase the availability and accessibility of OS-HELP.

Medical elective placements are a key component of most medical school curricula across Australia. These placements allow medical students to obtain further clinical experience in a specific area of medical interest. Many medical students elect to undertake such placements overseas.

These overseas placements provide great experiences for students, as many get to support the delivery of health care in a developing nation, gain extra clinical experience that may not be possible in the Australian health care system and increase their understanding of the global health.

AMSA believes that graduating medical students should:

- have a robust appreciation for the transnational health issues, determinants and solutions espoused within the global health paradigm;

- are sufficiently skilled to deal with the health of patients and communities in a globalised world; and
- are empowered global leaders driven to achieve global health equity.

Overseas medical placements provide a prime opportunity for medical students to achieve these aims. However, due to the costs associated with undertaking them, including: flights, vaccinations, accommodation and living expenses, there are significant financial barriers in their accessibility.

Currently, it is difficult for a great deal of medical students to obtain a loan under OS-HELP. These overseas placements are typically between four and eight weeks long. However, due to the particularities of each medical school, a student may not be officially enrolled in an overseas hospital or institution. This has prevented medical students from accessing OS-HELP and jeopardised many in benefitting from overseas placements.

We are pleased to see that more overseas placements, thanks to this Bill, would now fall within the scope of OS-HELP. AMSA is of the impression that this Bill would now cover these placements and is most supporting and appreciative of this development. If this is not the case, AMSA would urge the Inquiry to consider drafting amendments to explicitly cover such placements.

AMSA further believes that all domestic medical students, regardless of whether they hold Commonwealth Supported or Full-Fee places, should be eligible for OS-HELP when undertaking overseas medical elective placements. As such, we believe that the Bill should further increase the accessibility of OS-HELP to domestic students who hold Full-Fee places.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

**Richard Arnold**  
Acting President

**Steve Hurwitz**  
Public Relations Officer