



The Honorable Steve Georganas MP
c/- The Secretary of the Committee
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission No. 176
(Overseas Trained Doctors)
Date: 28/11/2011

Dear Mr Georganas

Re: Inquiry into Registration Processes and Support for Overseas Trained Doctors – Request for Additional Information

The information below was requested by committee members at the public hearing before the Standing Committee in Gosford.

Administrative Requirements within the Local Health District in Support of Overseas Trained Doctors and Current Resourcing

The Standing Committee requested some indication of the current resourcing implications of support for overseas trained doctors at the Local Health District (LHD) level.

In order to support recruitment of doctors from overseas, there is a full time health services manager position in place for the recruitment of junior medical staff, which mirrors positions in place at other health districts. A significant amount of additional recruitment staff time is committed to the recruitment of doctors from overseas at a junior medical officer level.

At a senior medical staff recruitment level the recruitment and associated applications for visas, registration, provider numbers and associated requirements comprises a significant workload across the LHD senior medical workforce coordinator (approximately 0.2 FTE of the role), Deputy Director of Medical Services (approximately 0.1 FTE of the role) and two finance officers (0.1 FTE of each of these roles).

The time commitment associated with seeking immunity from 19AB exemptions is approximately a hundred hours annually.

In addition to the costs involved in the above administrative workforce, the LHD also engages the support of specialist immigration agents, pays fees associated with 457 visas and generally reimburses costs associated with the Specialist Pathway of the Australian Medical Council.

Section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act 1973 and its application by Medicare Australia and by the Workforce Regulation Section

The granting of "19AB exemptions" is an important mechanism for hospitals such as Wyong and Gosford to attract and retain doctors into key specialist positions.

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The current system for seeking 19AB exemptions is complex and outcomes are unpredictable. Greater consideration of relevant factors such as current Area of Need status, subspecialty status within specialties or the transferral of workload out of area would assist. Improved access to guidance from the Workforce Regulation Section would also be helpful.

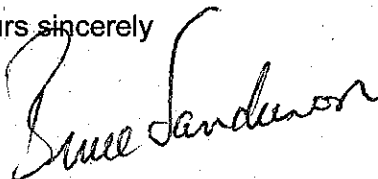
The Preliminary Assessment of District of Workforce Shortage process is a positive step. This could be further enhanced as follows:

Recommendations:

- That the Preliminary Assessment of District of Workforce Shortage (PADWS) criteria for assessing special needs are expanded to include consideration of the following:
 - Jurisdictions with open Area of Need certificates.
 - Areas where significant segments of work are sent out of the area, including conditions where there is a requirement for transfer by ambulance.
 - Sub-specialisation within specialty groups (such as pain management skills in anaesthesia, and specific procedural skills in radiologists and surgeons).
 - Public hospital service provision rosters and on call rosters.
 - Medical education requirements for junior medical staff (in addition to the current provisions for medical student teaching).
 - Jurisdictions that are recognised as growing rapidly.
 - Socio-economic status of a community.
- That the time frame for the advice given by the PADWS process is extended in order to allow for the migration process to completed. Twelve to 18 months is more appropriate than six months.
- That there is provision of additional contact details for the Workforce Regulation Section and enhanced capacity for this section to provide advice to applicants or their employers.
- That timeframes are provided for the preliminary assessment to all for better planning of immigration processes.
- That the map utility on the Doctor Connect website be expanded to include coverage of specialty groups.
- That the Workforce Regulation Section be empowered to release more detailed data to employers and applicants. The current method for calculating District Workforce Shortages status is opaque and cannot be contested.
- That the funds allocated to the Commonwealth International Medical Graduates Upskilling Program are made available to support costs incurred in the provision of Overseas Trained Doctor support.
- That efforts continue to reduce the administrative burden associated with the recruitment and training of doctors from overseas.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this additional information on this important issue. Should you require any clarification or additional information please do not hesitate to contact Alison Latta, Director Medical Services on Tel: (02) 4320 3214 or Email on alatta.health.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Dr Bruce Sanderson
Acting Chief Executive

Date: 22/11/11