

1 June 2009



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

PO Box 330
DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Level 1
Rowland House
10 Thesiger Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

RE: Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009 inquiry

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009.

Telephone
02 6260 5980

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) strongly supports the establishment of Health Workforce Australia. CHA's hospital and residential aged care CEOs report that their future clinical workforce needs are uppermost in their lists of issues of concern.

Facsimile
02 6260 5486

Australia faces a complex health workforce problem, which is set to significantly worsen over the coming decades. The responses by governments across all jurisdictions and political persuasions to this issue have to date fallen well short of what is required to ensure Australians will have access to health services into the future. CHA has the view that a long-term and system-wide approach to health workforce planning needs to be taken. The Productivity Commission in its Australia's Health Workforce, report released in 2006, highlighted the need for more effective, streamlined and integrated clinical training arrangements as well as the need to support workforce reform initiatives.

Email
secretariat@cha.org.au

It is CHA's view that the proposed Health Workforce Australia agency will have the capacity to take a longer term approach and end the fragmentation of current workforce planning.

Web
www.cha.org.au

CHA is particularly pleased to note the proposed arrangements for Health Workforce Australia will seek to formally involve the non-government sector. The non-government sector provides a range of health services as well as a significant proportion of acute care services normally delivered in hospital. For example around 60% of surgery is performed in the private sector. Students whose clinical training is confined to the public hospital system will not be exposed to the totality of health care that is currently delivered in Australia.

*The Catholic health,
aged and community
care sector*

There has long been a perception that State and Territory Health Departments have focused more on the workforce needs of their own publicly operated services rather than the entirety of the health system. We are hopeful that the advent of Health Workforce Australia will see the end of more narrow, short term approaches.

Catholic Health
Australia Incorporated

Catholic hospitals have played a role for many decades in clinical training for doctors and nurses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Eight public hospitals within Catholic Health Australia's membership are designated teaching hospitals. Additionally many Catholic private hospitals are also active in providing clinical training.

ABN 30 351 500 103

During the course of 2008, CHA proposed to Government the need to establish a National Health Workforce Commission. This would be a body that would bring together governments at all levels (and at the Commonwealth level it needed to include the health, education, employment and immigration portfolios as well as the appropriate central agencies), the nongovernment sector (including hospitals and the aged and community care sectors), the professions and consumers. CHA's proposal is attached and forms part of our submission.

The proposed Health Workforce Australia agency goes a considerable way to addressing the issues we have identified in relation to health workforce planning and for this reason CHA is supportive of the Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009 and looks forward to working with the agency in the future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this Bill and I would be happy to support this submission at a public hearing should that be required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Laverty', written in a cursive style.

Martin Laverty
Chief Executive Officer