



## Health Sciences Australia

Australian Council of Pro Vice -Chancellors and Deans of Health Sciences

29 May 2009

Senator Claire Moore  
Chair  
Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Moore

**RE: Inquiry into the Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009**

The Australian Council of Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Health Sciences (ACPDHS) is the peak representative body of those Australian universities that provide pre-professional education and training in allied health sciences. The Council is a forum for representation, coordination and information sharing with the aim of strengthening the training of allied health practitioners in Australia to meet the needs of communities. With the ageing of the Australian population and the growth of chronic disease, the allied health professions will be critical to providing adequate and appropriate health care to the Australian population.

The provision of a range of quality clinical placement experiences is essential to the production of appropriately skilled allied health professionals and the ACPDHS has been actively involved in the national consultations with the National Health Workforce Taskforce around clinical placement issues and the proposed Health Workforce Australia (HWA).

Whilst we welcome the establishment of HWA with its commitment to expanding clinical placement capacity through improved resourcing, we are particularly concerned with some aspects of the proposed Bill:

- ***The lack of clarity in the Bill as to powers and responsibilities of HWA.*** There is a suggestion in the **Explanatory Memorandum** to the Bill, supported by text in the Bill at **Clause 5 Functions 1 (b)**, that HWA will be involved in the management of clinical placement through a planning and coordination role. Whilst there is benefit in some centralised functions for HWA such as supporting health workforce research and planning, we strongly believe that there is no role for HWA in the central allocation of clinical training places. Existing clinical training places are the result of relationships between educational institutions and health facilities that often involve many years of negotiation. We firmly believe that a centralised allocation model would be detrimental to most training programs as it could destroy those personal relationships between education institutions and placement supervisors that currently enable clinical education to be effective in most situations. There is a danger of imposing another layer of (expensive) bureaucracy to the management of clinical placements through HWA involvement in clinical placement allocation.

We would also be concerned if there was a move through HWA to impose uniform clinical placement requirements within a discipline. The timing, length, placement models and

learning outcomes vary enormously both across and within professions. The diversity of health professional education is one of the strengths of the Australian system as it is responsive to the different needs of our dispersed population, encourages innovation and promotes excellence.

- ***The proposed composition of the Board of HWA.*** The ACPDHS is concerned that the proposed composition of the Board does not allow for adequate representation of all stakeholders involved in clinical placement, particularly if one of the key functions of HWA is to increase overall placement capacity. It is heavily weighted towards State and Territory representation, so that at best, the combined representation of educational institutions, private providers and the community sector could only ever be half the representation of the States and Territories. Balanced representation from all stakeholders involved in clinical placement activity would help ensure that HWA facilitates a real expansion in clinical placement opportunities. To achieve this there should be one or more dedicated places on the Board for members with specific health education expertise.

The ACPDHS supports in principle the establishment of HWA; however we remain concerned as to the proposed role and functions of HWA and the composition of the Board. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our concerns with you.

Yours sincerely



Professor Ian Wronski  
Chair