

Mr Elton Humphrey
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 260
By email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

AMSA Submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee

Re: Inquiry into Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009

Dear Mr Humphrey

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) is the peak representative body of Australia's 13,000 medical students. Our membership is geographically spread throughout all of Australia's nineteen medical schools and their placement sites. Developing an optimal health workforce is a key priority for AMSA. We would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the Inquiry into Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009.

Due to the level of communication with our members across the country, AMSA is uniquely placed to gather feedback for the committee from the people that will be affected by the changes. Our members will be able to make suggestions about how Health Workforce Australia may affect medical education and also on how the group might be set up optimally

We believe that AMSA would provide valuable contribution to many aspects of the bill. Part 1, Section 5 defines some of the functions of health Workforce Australia.

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Health Workforce Australia has the following functions:

- (a) To provide financial support for the delivery of clinical training (including simulation training) for the purposes of the health workforce by making payments to or in respect of:
- (i) Eligible students undertaking or proposing to undertake eligible clinical training; or
 - (ii) Persons providing eligible clinical training or facilities for eligible clinical training;

AMSA believes that we possess good insight into the financial support required in providing effective clinical placements. The rapidly increasing number of medical students and junior doctors in Australia has been a priority for AMSA over the last few years. Prospective planning with regard to clinical placements and intern allocation is vital in ensuring that all of these new students are accommodated, without compromising the quality of their education.

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- (d) To develop and evaluate strategies for development of the health workforce;

Any development of the health workforce will begin with students and education. AMSA would like to be consulted regarding these strategies and how Health Workforce Australia intends to develop these said strategies. Medical Education has been changing rapidly over recent years, most notably through the near doubling of student numbers. Strategy needs to be implemented carefully in a way that does not cause detriment to quality clinical placements for students

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- (e) To advise the Ministerial Conference on matters relating to the health workforce;

Medical student issues have an indirect, but very real effect on patient wellbeing and their health. AMSA would like to be consulted to ensure that Health Workforce Australia is designed so these student issues can be heard, and then passed on to the ministerial conference.

AMSA would also like to know how appointed members of the board will be kept abreast of student issues. If there is no mechanism to enable this, then AMSA believes it may be sensible to ensure a level of student representation.

AMSA believes that there is merit to the plans to form Health Workforce Australia. We believe that ideally, the group will function to improve funding, strategic direction and other support for health workforce training. If it manages this, Health Workforce Australia will be successful in preventing shortage and over supply of workers in the health industry.

However if Health Workforce Australia was to become directly involved in the operational aspects of medical education or if it became involved in the allocation of clinical places, AMSA believes that the group would be duplicating current practices that are effective, and indeed may not deliver as effective a clinical education as is currently being provided.

In conclusion, AMSA is excited about the development of a more effective health workforce in the future. We believe that many future improvements will need to be instituted at a student level. To ensure the quality of these developments, AMSA asks that we be consulted on the Health Australia Workforce Bill 2009. We look forward to communication on this matter and can be contacted through any of the methods listed.

Yours Sincerely

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