

Mr Elton Humphrey
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Legislation Committee
Australian Senate
Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Mr Humphrey,

RE: Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Health Workforce Australia Bill 2009. The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) supports the essence of the Bill and wishes to make brief comment on the composition of the Board of Health Workforce Australia (HWA) only.

In the current health environment, it has been recognised that there is a need to shift emphasis of health care away from delivery in the hospital sector to the primary health care sector. This approach is required to promote good health, prevent illness occurring and better manage existing chronic diseases in order to keep people out of hospitals. This policy priority has been recognised by the Australian and state / territory governments, in Council of Australian Government (COAG) statements, and in preliminary recommendations of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC).

AGPN notes that HWA Board members will be selected by the Australian Health Ministers' Conference, with nine nominees coming from each of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and up to four non-aligned members. AGPN is concerned that under these arrangements the essential voice of primary health care and general practice will be lost, particularly if the allocation of state and territory jurisdiction positions results in a Board weighted to the needs of the hospital sector.

AGPN therefore urges that the legislation be amended to reflect the requirement that (a minimum of) two or more HWA Board members be from the primary health care sector. Primary health care is the area in which the majority of health care is delivered, and it is essential for HWA to obtain a strong understanding of this sector at all levels of the organisation in order for its activities to make a contribution to building the capacity of both the sector and multidisciplinary care within it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Butt', is written over a white background.

David Butt
Chief Executive Officer

1 June 2009



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