

DEMOCRATS ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The Democrats support the Chair's Report, with one minor exception.

Recommendation 8.1 of the Report supports the proposal for 234 new bonded medical school places, but recommends amending the proposal to enable students to begin working off the bond period during postgraduate vocational training as Registrars.

The Democrats do not accept that the current bonding proposal has merit, for two reasons. The first is that the evidence presented to the Committee suggests that rural experience should be marketed as an opportunity and an integral part of medical training. Rural training provides medical students with greater skills in a non-interventionist non high-technology tertiary hospital environment. This should be valued as an important part of primary health care.

Secondly, it is not clear that rural communities will welcome being treated by reluctant freshly-trained doctors. Flexibility is important, to allow medical students the capacity to leave a town should they not be sufficiently interested in living in that community, for the sake of patients in that community.

The Democrats consider therefore that the recently implemented HECS reimbursement scheme, which enables participants who undertake training or provide medical services in rural areas to have one fifth of their HECS to be reimbursed for each year of service, should be continued and expanded.

Senator Lyn Allison
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