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Sent: Monday, 7 February 2011 9:58 AM
To: Committee, HAA (REPS)
Subject: FW: Submission re OET examination

Submission No. 95
(Overseas Trained Doctors)
Date: 21/02/2011

[Redacted]

Sent: Monday, 7 February 2011 8:16 AM
Subject: FW: Submission re OET examination

[Redacted]

Sent: Saturday, 5 February 2011 1:53 AM
To: Committee, Repts (REPS)
Subject: Submission re OET examination

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have only heard about the Inquiry into the Registration processes for OTHPs by chance in the last few days and I have been unable to put together sufficient detailed evidence to make a submission as yet. Nevertheless, I want to say something.

I have been an ESL lecturer at TafeSA, Adelaide campus for 14 years. Ten years ago I started our first OET preparation class when a number of my English language students who were overseas qualified health professionals told me about the OET exam and explained that there were no courses or other forms of help to assist them to pass the exam.

I have been running courses on 10 week cycles, twice yearly for the last ten years at minimal cost. I have noticed the increasing level of difficulty of all parts of the test over time, especially the Reading and Listening, and witnessed the commensurate stress and frustration of my students who have all been extremely motivated to succeed.

The changing of the rule requiring 4 pass grades at one sitting 2 years ago heralded a period of generalised panic and distress among my students, for financial as well as professional reasons. I could never understand how this rule helped OTHPs to move forward towards their career goals and saw many on the merry-go-round of 3 passes/1 fail score requiring a total resit each time despite pass scores in each section at some stage.

In terms of the ISLPR rating scale which we use to gauge language levels, it seems the OET exam is now a level 4/5 standard whereas it was originally designed to assess linguistic 'potential' (I recall level 3 ISLPR was deemed sufficient) before the candidate entered his chosen medical profession.

Strangely also, there has never been a control group of native speaker medical students to sit the OET as far as I know. This would give a more accurate idea of whether it is a fair test or not. I suspect many well educated native speakers would find the Reading and the Listening tests quite difficult and possibly fail.

I have also been unimpressed by the lack of precision of the feedback, the time taken to receive it and the inevitable and excessive cost.

Finally, the lack of materials made available from which to get some guidelines as to the requirements of a pass standard is also very unprofessional. Until recently the same old readings and case notes were reprinted in "new" sample tests, again quite expensive to buy and some of the writing examples were either full of errors or just the names and dates were changed (dentist's case notes). The CDs were also faulty and no refund or exchange was given to this student.

With some more time, I could detail numerous examples of excellent medical professionals and very decent people by the way, who have come here in good faith but who have been gradually crushed and defeated by this exam. The Australian Government needs to seriously overhaul this process to facilitate not block the pathway of skilled people into the Health System or not lure them out here in the first place with the promise of a bright future.