



Community and Public Sector Union

Beth Vincent-Pietsch • Deputy National Secretary

3 June 2014

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Radcliffe

Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is an active and effective union committed to promoting a modern, efficient and responsive public sector delivering quality services and quality jobs. We represent around 55,000 members in the Australian Public Service (APS), other areas of Commonwealth Government employment, ACT Public Service, NT Public Service, ABC, SBS and CSIRO.

The CPSU is the major union representing employees in Health Workforce Australia (HWA). The CPSU and its members work to ensure HWA functions efficiently and continues to be a high performing organisation. The CPSU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014.

HWA was established by the Council of Australian Governments to address the challenges of providing a skilled, flexible and innovative health workforce that meets the needs of the Australian community. HWA has delivered on these objectives by using a collaborative approach that has progressed innovation and reform in the health and education sectors. HWA has achieved real advances in workforce planning, national coordination and management of the recruitment and retention of international professionals, a sustained increase in capacity to support 8400 more students, investment to assist training and quality care and an improvement in productivity and distribution of the health workforce.

HWA has established collaborative links with stakeholders including the States and Territories who are the biggest employers in the health sector, universities and training institutions. The activities of HWA are supported by the Australian Medical Association, industry associations and academics. HWA's achievements may not have been realised without its independence, flexibility, influence and collaborative

approach. Absorbing the function of HWA into the Department of Health may put this at risk.

HWA currently has its head office located in Adelaide with a smaller office located in Melbourne. The dismantling of the Adelaide and Melbourne offices represents a wasteful expense and would undo 4 years of investment. HWA's achievements demonstrate the effectiveness of agencies located outside of Canberra. The relocation of HWA functions to the Department of Health (DoH) in Canberra will in itself be an expensive exercise. Additionally many staff have indicated to the CPSU that relocation to Canberra may not be viable due to their personal circumstances. This is problematic for DoH, the loss of quality staff well versed in the operation of HWA may put DoH at risk of not having the capacity to continue the important work of HWA. Potentially such a situation could alienate stakeholders. A simple way to increase the retention of staff and the future success of operations would be to relocate the functions of HWA to DoH offices in Adelaide and Melbourne.

Finally, the CPSU seeks that HWA staff, should they transfer to DoH, not be disadvantaged through changes to conditions of employment, the employment instrument or financially and that HWA and DoH continue to consult with the CPSU.

If the Committee requires further information from the CPSU in relation to the matters raised in this submission Elizabeth Hay, CPSU Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Yours sincerley

Beth Vincent-Pietsch
Deputy Secretary, CPSU.