



Flinders
UNIVERSITY

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

Dear Ms Radcliffe,

Re: Inquiry into the Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written submission.

As the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Flinders University I have had the opportunity to witness the establishment and roll out of the health workforce initiatives of Health Workforce Australia (HWA).

The decision by the Council of Australian Governments to establish HWA provided an important boost towards ensuring that our nation is able to train adequate numbers of health professionals to meet the current and future needs of our population.

Australia has benefited greatly from the decision to inject around one billion dollars towards increasing the number of health professionals being trained, to expand the number of clinical placements available, to develop new infrastructure to support clinical training in new locations especially in rural and remote Australia, to identify and support new opportunities for clinical placements in non-traditional health care settings, and to ensure the expansion of clinical simulation to support training of our health professional workforce.

At the same time HWA has worked with our nation's universities, professional colleges, accreditation agencies and health service providers to quantify the number of health professionals our nation needs to be training to meet future community needs. Additional programs have focused on areas such as ensuring that overseas trained health professionals migrating to Australia meet the standards expected of health professionals in this country.

The investment by the commonwealth into HWA has been welcomed across the health sector. Without this investment, growth in clinical training would have been much slower across the higher education sector.

On behalf of Flinders University I would like to express our gratitude for this investment and our congratulations to the board and staff of HWA for the professional way they have addressed each of the challenging tasks they have faced.

HEALTH WORKFORCE AUSTRALIA CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLINICAL TRAINING AT FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

I would like to quantify the benefits that we have seen through this investment at Flinders University.

Health Workforce Australia (HWA) has provided Flinders University with \$19,543,357.45 (excl. GST) through the Clinical Training Funding Program for the period 2011-2014, inclusive. The funds were provided through five separate Agreements with multiple schedules and Deeds of Variations. The funding has provided substantial infrastructure and support in delivering clinical training to students in the seven clinical disciplines at Flinders University determined by HWA to receive the funding. The benefits of this funding actually extend much wider and provide support for enhanced clinical training of all health profession students and many clinicians, especially based in rural and remote locations across South Australia and the Northern Territory.

STUDENT CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

The main objective of the HWA Clinical Training Funding program has been to increase student numbers in professional entry courses above the 2009 academic year baseline and increase clinical training days within professional entry courses above the 2010 academic year baseline levels. The current Agreement provides funding to maintain the growth that was achieved over the 3-year period from 2011-2013.

At Flinders University support from HWA has allowed us to expand our training of students in medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, dietetics, speech pathology and psychology. Flinders commenced training in occupational therapy and physiotherapy in 2012 and HWA funding has allowed us to advance our training much more swiftly than anticipated including expanding our training opportunities in rural and remote South Australia and our support for meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We have also been able to expand training into the Northern Territory, where Flinders University and Charles Darwin University have partnered to develop the Northern Territory Medical Program, training residents of the Northern Territory, and especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become doctors and to undertake their entire medical training for the first time in the Northern Territory. Flinders University and Charles Darwin University also partnered to develop the Palmerston Super Clinic, in an underserved area south of Darwin; this has been an extraordinary success and HWA funding has supported the clinic to become a major teaching centre for medical and allied health students from both universities.

One HWA-funded initiative has been the 4th Generation program at the Repatriation General Hospital in Adelaide. This is a major innovation in interprofessional teaching of students from medicine, nursing and allied health disciplines, with a specific focus on meeting the challenges of providing health care to the increasing proportion of elderly people in our community.

The funding to medicine has allowed Flinders University to develop new partnerships with private hospital providers and to expand our successful longitudinal clinical placement model where our senior medical students are based in general practices in rural and urban locations for a year, following their patients within the community, accompanying them on visits to hospitals and other health care providers, and gaining a much greater appreciation of the prevention and management of chronic disease and mental health problems, and the management of common conditions within the community.

HWA funding has allowed our university to greatly expand the clinical placement opportunities for our nursing students, expanding placements into private hospitals, aged care facilities, and supporting our students spending time with the network of community-based nurses providing home-based care.

A clinical simulated learning facility has also been created at the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs which not only provides training to students in Central Australia but is also an invaluable resource for the continuous professional education of nursing and medical staff based in remote communities, as well as clinical staff based at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Additional funding has been provided to allow Flinders University to expand our clinical simulation facilities, especially in the Greater Green Triangle region of Western Victoria and South-Eastern South Australia where Flinders University and Deakin University run in partnership the Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural

Health. While the Centre for Remote Health clinical simulation resource brings students and staff into Alice Springs for training, the clinical simulation resource operating out of Mount Gambier through the Greater Green Triangle University Department of Rural Health functions as a distributed program bringing training to clinicians based in remote regions of South Australia and also in south-west Victoria. Through this HWA-funded program, clinical educators are providing training at rural hospitals in Mount Gambier, Murray Bridge, Berri, Gawler, Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Whyalla, Roxby Downs, Port Lincoln and Ceduna in South Australia, and Portland and Hamilton in south-west Victoria. In one innovation, the Greater Green Triangle program has been involved with aircraft simulation disaster exercises carried out in Mount Gambier in March 2014.

ACCOMMODATION

HWA funding has allowed Flinders University to provide eight new residences and upgrade three existing residences to provide student accommodation in the Northern Territory.

A difficulty in previous years has been to provide adequate and appropriate housing to allow our students that complete their clinical training within remote and rural Australia locations. These dwellings funded through HWA allow for more than 35 students to be housed at any one time within different regions within the Northern Territory in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and the remote Aboriginal Communities of Binjari and Laramba.

The two dwellings built within Aboriginal Communities provide an invaluable and privileged opportunity for our medical students to receive clinical training in the health of Indigenous people living in remote communities.

CLINICAL TRAINING FACILITIES

Increasing available clinical training and teaching spaces has been a major program funded under HWA. HWA funding to Flinders University has seen the creation of three new clinical training facilities buildings and the refurbishment of facilities in seven existing locations. In particular funding has created clinical training spaces and new Simulated Learning Environments where our students can be challenged using programmable mannequins or actors as simulated patients.

The new buildings include:

1. An Ambulatory Rehabilitation Facility at the Repatriation General Hospital in Adelaide, which was leveraged against larger funding amounts provided by SA Health. The consultation rooms provided by HWA allow our students to participate with patients directly, or to observe consultations via audiovisual-equipped teaching spaces.
2. Extension of O'Keefe House at Katherine Hospital in the Northern Territory. This is a new standalone building which includes a space specifically utilised by local Indigenous Elders who work with our students to support them to gain knowledge and understanding about working in Aboriginal Health. The new building contains consulting/teaching rooms, a video conferencing space and space for clinical simulation.
3. Extension of Clinical Space within the Flinders University building at Noarlunga Hospital. The addition of a 100m² space enables 24 additional health professional students to participate in clinical training sessions in this outer metropolitan location in Adelaide.

The refurbishment projects provide revitalised training spaces in both the Northern Territory and South Australia and have included:

1. A new occupational therapy laboratory at Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide.
2. An occupational therapy space dedicated for students who are completing their clinical placement within the South Australian Rural Health network operating out of our Adelaide Hills rural teaching facility.
3. A new Health and Community Building located at Binjari, 18 kms south west of Katherine, which is used by the local Indigenous community for a variety of community activities working with our students on clinical placements in this community.

4. The refurbishment and fit-out of the Flinders University Nursing Laboratory Building to create a Clinic Room Complex. This extensive refurbishment includes several dedicated simulated learning training spaces with observation and control centres.
5. Refurbishments of consult/teaching spaces within the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) complex in Alice Springs. This allows for training of medical student within service dedicated to Indigenous health.

It will be clear from these examples, that the HWA funding has also been utilised to support enhanced clinical training opportunities for all clinical disciplines, especially in rural and remote locations across South Australia and the Northern Territory, and to greatly enhance training in Indigenous health and well being. The cessation of HWA funding puts at risk our capacity to continue to deliver this level of intensity of clinical training and experience across the health profession disciplines at Flinders University.

I understand the plan is to roll the functions of Health Workforce Australia into the Australian Government Department of Health. I hold the leadership and staff of the Department of Health in very high regard. As we have seen from the national workforce projections created by HWA, Australia is facing a serious health workforce crisis over the coming decade. Health Workforce Australia has been a critical component of our nation's response to this looming crisis and I hope these core activities will continue to be supported.

Yours sincerely

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