

Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014

Portfolio: Health

Introduced: House of Representatives, 15 May 2014

1.108 The Health Workforce Australia (Abolition) Bill 2014 (the bill) disestablishes Health Workforce Australia (HWA) and transfers the functions and programmes of HWA to the Commonwealth Department of Health.

1.109 The bill is accompanied by a statement of compatibility which states that it does not engage any of the applicable rights or freedoms and is therefore compatible with human rights.¹

1.110 The committee considers that the bill does not appear to give rise to human rights concerns.

1.111 However, the committee notes that the function of HWA is to promote a national coordinated approach to creating a health workforce able to meet the current and future healthcare needs of Australia. In this respect, the bill may be seen as engaging the right to health.²

1.112 The explanatory memorandum for the bill notes that the functions and programmes of HWA will be moved to the Commonwealth Department of Health. It states:

The disestablishment of HWA and transfer of its functions and programmes to the Department of Health will provide efficiencies by removing duplication in programmes and programme management. It will also reduce the health bureaucracy. It will enable more efficient and effective delivery of policy and programme activities related to the health workforce, to ensure Australia continues to have a high quality, capable and well distributed health workforce, delivering frontline health services for all Australians.³

1.113 The committee notes that, while the purpose of the bill is to provide more efficient and effective delivery of policy and program activities related to the health workforce, any consequent reduction in the effectiveness of such activities could result in a limitation of the right to health. The committee's assessment assumes that the policy of transferring HWA's functions to the Department of Health will be effective.

1 Explanatory memorandum (EM), p. 2.

2 International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, article 12.

3 EM, p. 1.