

12 June 2012

Hon. Dr Kim Desmond Hames  
28th Floor, Governor Stirling Tower  
197 St Georges Terrace  
Perth WA 6000

Dear Deputy Premier Hames,

**RE: Severe shortages in 2013 internship allocation**

The Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA), the Medical Students' Association of Notre Dame (MSAND) and the Western Australian Medical Students' Society (WAMSS) urge the Western Australian Government to make funding available and ensure that there will be an internship position for every graduating medical student in WA this year, and in future years.

AMSA is the peak representative body for Australia's 17,000 medical students. AMSA is committed to advocating for the highest quality medical education and training, in order to ensure a sustainable medical workforce that is able to serve the health needs of the Australian population. MSAND and WAMSS represent the medical students of the University of Notre Dame Fremantle and the University of Western Australia respectively.

Obtaining and completing an internship is necessary in order to gain full registration to practice as a doctor in Australia. In this year's internship allocation it is very likely that there will be severe shortages of internship positions, resulting in graduating medical students not being able to serve as doctors for the Australian community.

In 2012 there are expected to be 3,512 medical graduates nationally. This represents an increase of 1,852 since 2001. In WA there is expected to be 298 graduating medical students in 2012. Official numbers from the Postgraduate Medical Council of Western Australia indicate that there will only be 280 internship positions available within WA by 2013. Therefore it is estimated that 6% of graduates from WA medical schools will not be offered an internship, including a number of *domestic* medical graduates, **to whom the WA Government has repeatedly committed positions for in recent years.**

Australia is facing a medical workforce shortage, with the recent *Health Workforce 2025* Report predicting a shortage of 2,700 doctors by 2025. The effects of this will be significantly exacerbated by the maldistribution of Australia's medical workforce, with many rural communities experiencing severe workforce shortages.

International students are an effective solution to increasing services to Australia's areas of workforce shortages. Eighty-seven per cent of the 2006 to 2010 international medical students continuing to reside in Australia were available for employment after one year, compared to 91.5% of domestic graduates, with 97.4% of those having secured full-time employment within six months, compared to just 53% of international medical graduates who gain some form of medical

employment in Australia within their first 5 years. Currently international medical students are subject to the restrictions outlined under section 19AB of the Health Insurance Act (1973)<sup>1</sup>.

Given the WA Government's endorsement of Curtin University's proposal to open a new medical school, we trust that the government will respond to the current internship shortage and urgently make funding available to ensure that there will be an internship for every graduating medical student in WA this year.

AMSA, MSAND and WAMSS thank the WA Government for its efforts to date to increase the number of internship positions to accommodate the growing number of graduating medical students. However, it is now clear that further action is urgently needed to avoid the impending internship crisis.

Yours sincerely,



James Churchill  
President  
AMSA



Ghassan Zammar  
President  
MSAND



Benjamin Host  
President  
WAMSS

CC: Mr Kim Snowball  
Director General, WA Department of Health

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<sup>1</sup> *The Early Migration and Career Trajectories of International Medical Students Qualified in Australia*. L Hawthorne & A To (2012), Unpublished report for the Medical Deans of Australasia, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, University of Melbourne.