

30 July 2012

The Hon. David Davis MLC
Minister for Health
Victorian Government

Dear Minister,

RE: Petition to train the doctors Australia needs

On behalf of the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA), I write to present you with the attached petition calling on Health Ministers to train the doctors Australia needs.

The 6,472 signatories to the petition asked the following of Health Ministers:

“Despite a shortage of doctors in many rural Australian communities, this year it is predicted that nearly 500 medical graduates from Australian medical schools will be unable to obtain an internship in Australia and therefore be unable to work as doctors in underserved Australian communities.

We urge you to commit to train the workforce needed to address the rural workforce shortage and provide for Australia's population health needs by ensuring that, this year, there is an internship available for every medical graduate in Australia. Without ensuring this, these medical graduates will be unable to serve the community as doctors and forced to move overseas or work outside of medicine. This would represent a wasted investment in training future doctors and lost opportunity to address the needs of communities who have inadequate access to medical services.”

AMSA welcomes the collective efforts of Health Ministers that have increased the number of internships such that the anticipated deficit has been reduced to 374. AMSA welcomes the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council's recent commitment to further quantify the shortfall of places and to move quickly to expand capacity, including an examination of capacity for expansion in non-traditional settings such as private and community settings.

Whilst expansion of capacity and investigation of innovative solutions are welcome, maintenance of quality training must be a primary concern. At this time, AMSA calls for this action be instigated with urgency, such that the implementation of any new positions and training settings are finalised in time to be subject to the same rigorous standards of accreditation that are usually applied to pre-vocational positions. AMSA is concerned that waiting until after the conclusion of offer rounds, as has been indicated by AHMAC, may not allow sufficient time for these processes to occur.

Furthermore, it is critical that internships for 2013 are not funded at the expense of more senior training positions, such as post graduate year 2 or 3 (PGY2 or PGY3), as these positions will be needed to allow the increased number of graduates to continue their training. Clearly, in this situation the capacity and funding of health systems must be grown, not redistributed, to meet the community's need for a sustainable medical training pipeline.

Should you wish to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact Ms Helen Jentz, AMSA Chief Executive Officer, on (02) 6140 4556 or via ceo@amsa.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



James Churchill
President