

February 22, 2011

The Hon David Davis MLC  
Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write to you as Chair of the Medical Student Council of Victoria (MSCV), peak representative body for the 3,300 Medical students studying in Victoria. May I first congratulate you on your election and appointment as Health Minister, and wish you the best for your time in office.

I wish to bring to your attention a critical concern raised by our members, being the availability of sufficient numbers of Internship positions in Victorian health services in 2012.

Background:

In order to gain 'general' registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (APHRA), graduates of Australian Medical Schools are required to undertake one year of supervised employment, an 'Internship', accredited by their state's Postgraduate Medical Council [1]. General registration is required for any further practice of Medicine in Australia.

In the past decade, the number of Medical Schools in Victoria has increased from two in 2007 to five (producing graduates) in 2011. This has led to a substantial, sharp and sustained increase in the annual number of graduates, from 403 in 2004 to a predicted 853 in 2014 [2], including permanent-resident and temporary-resident full-fee ('international') students\*.

The MSCV recognises the former ALP State Government's commitments on forward planning for this increase, specifically the allocation of additional clinical resources to improve the training capacity of the health system and recent incremental increases in the number of state-funded Internship positions. It also notes the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement to guarantee clinical training and Internship positions for all Commonwealth-funded graduates [3].

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\*Data on the projected number of Medical graduates of the University of Notre Dame Sydney 'Melbourne Clinical School' are not readily available; this cohort is therefore excluded from this calculation

However, issues in the Medical education and workforce systems remain. In the 2010 Intern match for 2011 positions, the Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria (PMCV) accredited 623 Internship positions at Victorian health services. This number was narrowly in excess of the number of Medical graduates of Victorian Medical Schools in 2010, including both permanent-resident and international students of the University of Melbourne and Monash University Medical Schools [4].

The MSCV understands that the number of state-funded Internship positions in Victorian health services in 2012 is planned to equal the number of permanent-resident students graduating from Victorian Medical Schools in 2011. In addition to existing programs at the University of Melbourne and Monash University, these permanent-resident Medical graduates will include those of the new Deakin University Medical School, Monash University 'Gippsland Medical School' and the University of Notre Dame Sydney 'Melbourne Clinical School', whose first cohorts graduate in 2011.

Significantly, as Victorian-trained permanent-resident graduates are given priority in the allocation of Internship positions, the available number proposed for 2012 does not allow for Victorian-trained international and interstate-trained graduates to obtain an Internship position in Victorian health services, with the exception of those positions vacated by Victorian-trained permanent-resident graduates who gain a position interstate. MSCV anticipates the number of interstate Internship positions available in 2012 to Victorian-trained graduates to be small, as other states also face similar issues of insufficient Internship capacity.

To consider these issues facing Australian Governments and health systems, the AMA Medical Training Summit of September 2010 brought together representatives from the Medical profession (AMA), the national Medical student body (AMSA), Medical Schools (MDANZ) and Postgraduate Medical Councils (CPMEC). The Summit produced a Joint Statement, outlining its concerns and recommendations, a document whole-heartedly endorsed by the MSCV. The paper is attached here for your reference.

MSCV acknowledges the competing priorities of health service delivery, clinical training and, particularly, pressures of maintaining the availability of core rotations of high-quality Internship placements. However, in the setting of Australia's shortage of trained Medical staff, reliance on the importation of International Medical Graduates, an ageing population and an increasing burden of chronic disease, the State Government's decision to leave Victorian-trained Medical graduates without the means to work in Victorian health services does not seem to be in the best interest of Victorians. International graduates of Victorian Medical Schools are trained to the same high standards as permanent-resident graduates, have a working knowledge of the Victorian health system and the services in which they would be required to work and are an immediate solution to understaffing in our public hospitals.

Recommendation:

In the interests of the users of Victorian health services, the MSCV implores the Victorian Government to examine its policies on the funding of Internship positions in our public hospitals. We call for an immediate increase in the number of state-funded Internship positions in Victorian health services, to a number commensurate with the total number of Victorian-trained Medical graduates, such that the Victorian health system may fully utilise the highly skilled workforce generated by its Medical schools.

I would be glad to brief you further on this issue if you wish, and eagerly await your reply.

Yours truly,



James Churchill  
Chair, Medical Student Council of Victoria

The Medical Student Council of Victoria is the peak representative body for Victorian Medical students, consisting of representatives from each of the relevant Medical Student Society Executives. Further information, including contact details, may be found on the MSCV website, [www.mscv.org.au](http://www.mscv.org.au)

CC: Ms Carol Jordan, Executive Director, PMCV

Dr Harry Hemley, President, AMA Victoria

Mr Robert Marshall, President, Australian Medical Students' Association

References:

1. Medical Board of Australia. *Medical Registration*. 1 July 2010; Available from: <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Medical-Registration.aspx>.
2. Medical Training Review Panel, *13th Report*, 2010. p. 11-15.
3. Council of Australian Governments, *Communique*, 14 July 2006.
4. Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria, *Brief Report on 2010 Medical Intern Computer Matching Service for 2011 Appointments*, 2010.