



New doctors face intern pain

Training places below demand

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GEELONG medical students face uphill battles to secure internship positions for 2012 as the number of Victorian medical graduates is set to increase by more than 30 per cent.

It's a rare case of too many doctors, as a flood of 792 students is expected to graduate with medical degrees across the state later this year, compared with 586 students last year, while the number of internship positions will only increase by 12 per cent.

This rise is expected to create a bottleneck in the system, with some Victoria-trained medical students predicted to miss out on the compulsory internship year.

Medical Student Council of Victoria chair James Churchill said a significant number of students had contacted the council with concerns.

"The current shortage of internships reflects a period of failure of adequate workforce planning and communication at the federal, state and university level," Mr Churchill said.

"There has been a sharp increase in the number of medical students in the past five years, in response to a shortage of doctors in Australia.

"However, in order for an increase in the number of medical students to be effective in relieving this shortage, quality training positions must be made available."

In 2008, two new medical schools opened in Victoria - at Deakin University's Geelong Campus and Monash University's Gippsland Campus. The first cohorts from these medical schools will graduate later

this year, leading to the significant rise in medical graduates.

Internships are currently allocated to local students first, and to international full-fee paying students later. Although domestic students are guaranteed an internship position, Australian-educated international graduates could miss out.

"Should international student graduates not gain internships in Victoria, we are concerned that demand for international full-fee medical places may decline among prospective students," Mr Churchill said.

"International students contribute greatly to university culture, and medical schools may need to consider the full implications of a reduction in this demand."

According to figures from the former National Health Workforce Taskforce (NHWT) there is a shortage of approximately 6300 medical practitioners across Australia.

The national healthcare system currently employs approximately 6100 international doctors on tempor-

ary resident visas.

AMA Victoria president Harry Hemley has called for government action to fix the problem.

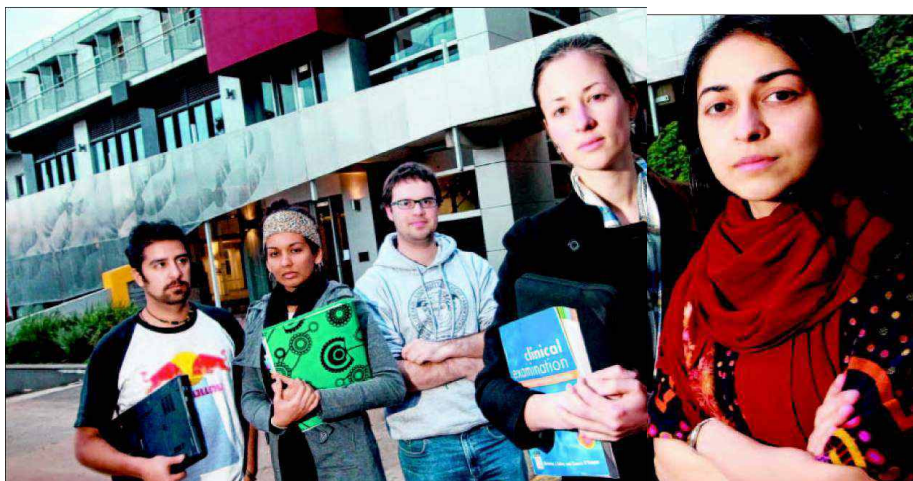
"AMA Victoria calls on the Government to work towards finding intern places for these students," Dr Hemley said.

"The Government must also ensure that all interns receive adequate training once they begin work in a hospital. This requires access to senior doctors, patients and free-from-service training time."

Dr Hemley also called on the Baillieu Government to commit to extra specialist training places in the already under-funded sector.

"Increasing the number of specialist training places is essential to ensure there are enough experienced doctors working in our health system in the future," he said.

"If we don't find solutions to the shortage of specialist teachers and mentors, and increase the number of specialist training places, future waiting times for elective surgery and emergency care will become even longer."



FUTURE FEAR: Second year Deakin medical students Dan Hanna, Sameera Hapuarachchi, Anthony Uccellini, Tegan Dobbie and Masoomeh Khajehnoori



The status

YEAR	AVAILABLE INTERNSHIPS (VIC)	EXPECTED NO. OF GRADUATES	
2009	508	498	Source: Medical Training Review Panel, Fourteenth Report March 2011 and Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria
2010	558	534	
2011	625	586	
2012	699	792	