



Consumers  
Health Forum  
of Australia

Ref: S08/09 Misc

28 October 2008

Ms Joanne Palisi  
Director  
Adjudication Branch  
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission  
GPO Box 3131  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

FILE No.
DOC:
MARS/PRISM.

Dear Ms Palisi

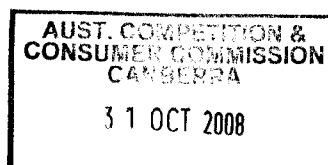
**Australian Medical Association Limited and state/territory AMA organisations  
application for authorisation A91100 - interested party consultation**

Thank you for your correspondence of 22 August 2008, inviting the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) to submit comments in relation to the notice from the Australian Medical Association Limited (AMA) and the AMA state/territory bodies in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and Tasmania, seeking to collectively negotiate with relevant state/territory health departments, the terms of contracts for rural general practitioners providing services in public hospitals and health facilities in rural and remote areas of Australia.

CHF is not in a position to comment directly on the negotiations proposed by the AMA, however I would like to raise for your consideration that consumers' expectations about the provision of services by medical practitioners should be met as follows:

- The medical workforce will be sufficient and appropriate to ensure safe good quality healthcare where and when it is needed to meet community needs;
- Negotiations to achieve this will look to systemic solutions not individual benefits and be industrially neutral; and
- It will be nationally consistent and coordinated.

There are also particular access issues in rural Australia with its workforce challenges. These include minimising the impact for patients on out of pocket costs, and improving the availability of bulk billing and after-hours services.



CHF urges you to consider these expectations in assessing the collective bargaining negotiations. I trust that you will consider the views of CHF in making your decision in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Hopkins', with a long, flowing horizontal line extending to the right.

**Helen Hopkins**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**