



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

FILE No:

DOC:

MARS/PRISM:

Ms Isabelle Arnaud
Director
Adjudication Branch
Australian Competition & Consumer Commission
GPO Box 3131
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Arnaud

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2008 to Ms Jane Halton, Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing regarding the application for authorisation lodged by the Rural Doctors Association of Australia Limited (RDAA) in respect to hospital agreements for visiting medical officers (VMOs) in rural areas. Ms Halton has asked me to respond on her behalf.

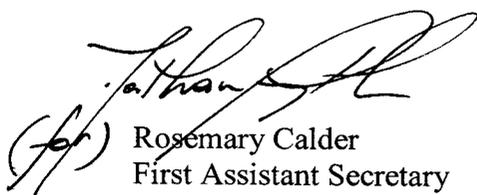
I have noted the terms of the RDAA submission. At this time, the Department of Health and Ageing does not wish to comment in response to the RDAA application.

The management and provision of public health services through public hospitals and health facilities is the responsibility of individual state and territory governments. Therefore, the issue of hospital agreements for visiting medical officers is not something on which the Department wishes to comment.

The Department acknowledges the valuable role of general practitioners in providing visiting medical officer services in rural areas. In many rural and remote communities, general practitioners (GPs) with dual roles provide essential medical services in acute settings for inpatient care as GP proceduralists and in emergency services. For many, this involves sustained periods of on-call for emergencies, and is a significant point of difference between rural and metropolitan practices.

The Department recognises the importance of doctors successfully negotiating such contracts, especially in rural and regional Australia. They are an important source of income for doctors and enable the provision of essential medical services to patients.

Yours sincerely


(for) Rosemary Calder
First Assistant Secretary

Mental Health and Workforce Division
26 February 2008

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