



Consumers
Health Forum
of Australia

Ref: L026D

15 May 2008

Ms Joanne Palisi
Director
Adjudication Branch
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
PO Box 1199
DICKSON ACT 2602

FILE No.
DOC:
MARS/PRISM

Dear Ms Palisi

RE: Application for authorisation A91088 lodged by the Australian Medical Association (NSW) Limited – interested party consultation

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 April 2008, inviting the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) to submit comments in relation to the notice from the Australian Medical Association (NSW) seeking authorisation to collectively negotiate with NSW Health and public health organisations in NSW the terms and conditions of visiting medical officer (VMO) contracts in the NSW public hospital system.

The Consumers' Health Forum of Australia is not in a position to comment directly on the negotiations proposed by the AMA (NSW), 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 the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia in making your decision in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hopkins
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

