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

Dear Ms Arnaud

RE: Application for authorisation A91078 lodged by the Rural Doctors Association of Australia Limited – interested party consultation.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above submission to the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission.

The Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) in the Northern Territory negotiates conditions of employment with visiting medical officers who are specialists. As the RDAA in their submission to the ACCC is not intending to negotiate on behalf of medical specialists there would be no need for the Department to enter into any collective bargaining arrangements that the RDAA may wish to pursue under the terms of their submission to the ACCC. The Department does not have general practitioners providing visiting medical services in rural areas. A general practitioner may be contracted to work in a remote area as a practitioner but is not considered a visiting medical officer.

The industry bodies that DHCS negotiates with are the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation (ASMOF) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA). DHCS is currently moving towards having a Departmental model that encompasses employment arrangements for VMO specialists across the Northern Territory that is sensitive to local circumstances. Even if the RDAA were seeking to represent specialists in the negotiation of contractual arrangements, the creation of a third tier of industry representation would involve the Department in an additional agreement making process that would not outwardly benefit health outcomes in the Northern Territory.

If you have any further enquiries relating to this matter, please contact Danny Coombes from our Industrial Relations unit on 08 829227193.

Yours sincerely

David Ashbridge

18 January 2008

