



**Australian Government**

**Department of Health and Ageing**

**DEPUTY SECRETARY**

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

Dear Ms Palisi

**Australian Medical Association Limited application for authorisation of collective bargaining - A91100**

Thank you for your letter of 22 August 2008 in relation to the above application 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 authorisation to collectively negotiate with relevant state/territory health departments, the terms of contracts for rural general practitioners providing services as Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs) in public hospitals and health facilities in rural and remote areas of Australia (except New South Wales).

The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is committed to ensuring that all Australians have access to public hospital services free of charge on the basis of clinical need and within clinically appropriate times. This is a condition of Commonwealth funding under the current Australian Health Care Agreements. The management of individual public hospitals to meet this objective is a matter for State and Territory Governments.

The Department has no information which would indicate the supply of doctors to rural areas would be affected one way or the other by the use or otherwise of a collective negotiation.

The Department is keen to ensure that employment arrangements support the recruitment and retention of doctors in rural areas and should not affect the quality or amount of supervision provided to medical students and trainees by VMOs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Yours sincerely

David Kalisch  
Deputy Secretary  
Department of Health and Ageing  
10 September 2008

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