



AIDA

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To whom it may concern

Re: Australian General Practice Training Program / Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Salary Support Program Review 2016-2017

This letter is in response to the invitation to input into the review of the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) Salary Support Program. As the peak national body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) welcomes the opportunity to put forward our views on this important matter.

AIDA strives to increase opportunities across the medical education and training spectrum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors. We know that growing our workforce is an important element to shaping a culturally safe health system. We are committed to working with our partners and peers at the national level in creating a health care system that is high quality, reflective of needs and that is respectful and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values.

General comments

AIDA remains concerned that the AGPT salary support program is being further considered for review. We have made a number of representations to the Department and relevant Ministers on this matter in 2015 and 2016. AIDA acknowledges the summary of consultations to date provided in the most recent discussion paper and we are pleased to note the particular resolution on the proposed time-limit of 12 months to a salary support-funded place.

AIDA is firmly of the view that the AGPT salary support program is a positive policy measure that has a direct impact on growing a well-trained GP workforce. Registrars who train under this program gain invaluable clinical, social and cultural insights and skills. AIDA strongly supports the contribution this program makes towards training the GP workforce to offer culturally safe and appropriate clinical care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We assert that any reduction in the funding or scope of the AGPT salary support program will have a direct and adverse impact on primary health care service delivery in areas where it is most needed.

In particular, AIDA is concerned of the impacts this would have on Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) and Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS). As the Department would be aware, AGPT salary support is an important resource that supports workforce development planning for these sectors and any reduction in the current program budget or scope would have real and immediate impacts on health services at the operational level.

A strengths-based approach

AIDA encourages the Department to consider the AGPT salary support program as a tangible and effective policy measure that is contributing to closing the gap on the unacceptable health disparities that currently exist between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. The rationale and logic that underpins the program is forward-looking and recognises the importance of a well-trained GP workforce in providing the appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. AIDA would also emphasise that the AGPT salary support program was established with the support of many different organisations across the sector who all continue to have a shared commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The discussion paper – AGPT salary support review 2016 – 2017

AIDA notes page 4 of the discussion paper states:

‘In the context of this review, which seeks to identify ways to maximise the benefit of the Salary Support Program within an annual capped allocation, refinement of eligibility criteria is important.’

AIDA does not endorse either of the proposals listed underneath this statement. Our position is that the funding should not be allocated to a smaller number of registrars for longer periods, or a larger number of registrars for shorter term placements. The funding is best considered within a longer-term lens applied regarding the actual benefits of this program to growing a well-trained GP workforce.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kali Hayward
President

21 July 2017