

Health Workforce Study
Productivity Commission
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Productivity Commission Health Workforce Study – Importance of Health Informatics Workforce Capacity Building

The Australian Health Information Council (AHIC) advises Health Ministers via the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council on how information management and information and communication technology (IM&ICT) effort can be harnessed to address current and emerging needs in health care delivery, management and planning.

The introduction of advanced information technology provides opportunities to improve productivity and make better use of existing resources. The role of information technology in day-to-day clinical practice is becoming increasingly important for accessing and communicating health-related information. Better health information management is also essential to assist in the adoption of best available evidence in routine healthcare practice, to improve continuity of care and to simplify healthcare processes.

There is significant investment in health information management infrastructure by Australian Governments. Most States are committed to significant expenditure (over \$350 million in the next 2 years) on new clinical information systems and patient administration systems, and several states are planning to implement electronic health records. Private sector health organisations are continuing to develop information systems and to invest in information technologies in order to manage their businesses and to improve the efficiency, and standards of care and service that they are able to provide.

To ensure maximum return on the considerable investments that have been made in the area of information technology in the health sector, it is necessary to make sure that the health workforce has the knowledge and skill base to engage with and use the new technologies. Without this, the investment in infrastructure will not meet its full potential, and opportunities for efficiency gains and improvements in clinical care may not be realised.

Therefore, an important element in realising the benefits of health information management and information technology is to provide the health workforce with information and training in the practical applications of information technology. This should involve developing the capacity of our health workforce across the continuum from basic computer and information technology skills to specialist clinical information use, information management and health research/informatics expertise.

AHIC requests the Health Workforce Study to consider the contribution that effective use of information technology can make to health workforce productivity and improved patient outcomes and to support initiatives to provide appropriate health informatics training.

Please contact me if you would like further information or advice on this submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Coats', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Andrew J. S. Coats
Chair
Australian Health Information Council

31 August 2005