

Health Workforce Study  
Productivity Commission  
PO Box 80  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to your recent report: Australia's Health Workforce.

There is a number of positive considerations made by the Commission in relation to the Health community, which we shall not address in this response. However, we believe it is important for the Commission's consideration to raise the following points which we hope it will take into its final deliberations.

These are:

- The Report also does not identify intensive care as a specialised medical service, or a medical speciality. This is despite the fact that the 'intensive care has a vital role as a critical link in the chain of the continuum of care.

Intensivists led management has produced a significant positive impact on patient outcomes and minimise the impact on health budgets and patients costs.

- The Report also does not recognise the shortage of Intensive Care specialists in the health system, and accordingly, does not address this as a key issue .

The Report endorsed a substitution strategy in addressing workforce shortage. In critical care this could have 'disastrous consequences' with a negative impact on patient outcome, safety and quality.

- In addressing the medical workforce shortage in the Rural sector, it is vital that rural hospital and critical care infrastructure provides for the development of accredited training and incentives for qualified professionals to work in rural areas. Failure to do so, will result in a sub-standard medical workforce.

- We cannot escape from the fact that remuneration is an integral part of the workforce development. The RVS provided a framework for medical workforce remuneration. We believe it is a joint responsibility of government and private funding agencies to address the apparent gap in financial incentives in certain professional groups, particularly intensive care and emergency medicine.

- We believe that accreditation and certification must remain solely the responsibility of the professional colleges to maintain standards and allow adequate constructive supervision and quality audits.

- We believe, and strongly support, national central registration of medical practitioners to facilitate better health outcomes for the nation.

Intensive care is an area where medical and information technology is constantly advancing and has a substantial impact on patient outcome. It is important, therefore, to create a culture of research, innovation and creativity to promote better quality and outcome for patients. The Report seems to assume that culture of 'average' is a good target for health care professionals to achieve.

ANZICS believes its role in the future of the health system is critical for the industry debate and welcomes the opportunity to provide constructive input into future deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive