



AHPA News Update

Mid year 2007

Major Conference

Allied Health Professions Australia has just announced that it will auspice the next Allied Health National Conference, in Canberra in August 2009. Built around the theme – ‘Allied Health Leading Change’ this event will be a major opportunity to focus on the crucial role of allied health professionals at the forefront of Australian health care. AHPA Executive Officer Professor Lyn Littlefield will announce details of the 2009 conference at this year’s conference in Hobart in July.

New Members

In January AHPA welcomed the Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science as the latest member of the association, and in May SARRAH (Services for Rural and Remote Allied Health) also became a member. AHPA encourages appropriate organisations to join AHPA and thus strengthen the voice of allied health.

Key Issues

- **Higher education funding**

AHPA’s strong campaign for changes to higher education funding has produced some useful results, with a 25% increase in allied health higher education funding announced in the May Budget. However, the gap between funding for allied health and medicine is still much too large.

AHPA’s pre-Budget submission urged the Australian Government to move allied health-related undergraduate courses into the same funding cluster as dentistry and medicine. AHPA also argued that funding for the clinical education of allied health professionals should be specifically recognised in measures developed to implement the National Health Workforce Strategic Framework, which the Council of Australian Governments (CoAG) has endorsed. These arguments were reiterated in AHPA’s submission to the Review of the *Higher Education Support Act*.

- **National registration and accreditation**

The nine professions involved in the first wave for national registration include two professions represented on AHPA, namely physiotherapists and psychologists. Through its efforts on the COAG Health Working Group, AHPA has seen significant improvements made to the original proposals; and continues to work on behalf of other professions that hope to achieve national registration in due course. The new structure for national registration and accreditation was accepted in April and will commence mid 2008.

Meetings with decision-makers

Contact with politicians and government officials is a crucial part of AHPA’s work to strengthen the role and recognition of allied health in Australia.

In February, representatives of AHPA spent two days in Canberra meeting with a range of decision-makers and discussing a broad spectrum of topics relevant to allied health and allied health professionals. Key meetings included:

- **Higher education funding** – Met with several people from DEST - Caroline Perkins, Branch Manager Policy and Analysis Branch, Higher Education Group; Rod Manns, Branch Manager Funding & Student Support Branch; Laura Santini, Director, Institution Funding, and Karen Sandercock. Discussed the Review of the impact of the Higher Education Support Act 2003: clusters and pipeline arrangements.
- **Medicare** - Megan Morris, First Assistant Secretary, Medical Benefits Division, DoHA; Samantha Robertson, Assistant Secretary, MBS Policy Implementation Branch; Peter Woodley, Assistant Secretary, Diagnostics and Technology Branch. A general discussion on the MBS. AHPA is keen to see greater recognition within Medicare of evidence-based allied health procedures.
- **Departmental links** - David Kalisch, Deputy Secretary DoHA; Richard Eccles and Martin Mullane, Ambulatory and Primary Care. Discussed interaction of the Department with allied health and ways to improve liaison. Also discussed the possibility of funding for AHPA projects. A follow-up meeting was held in June with Judy Daniel, Assistant Secretary, Primary Care and Chronic Disease Branch, Department of Health and Ageing.
- **Higher education funding** - Darren Brown, Senior Adviser, Office of the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training. Discussed the HESA Review and the impact of allied health lobbying on getting cluster and pipeline funding as the first stage of the review.
- **Aged care** - Jessica Taylor, Adviser, Office of Senator the Hon Santo Santoro, then Minister for Ageing. New funding for aged care and the impact of the funding instrument were discussed, plus the shortage of AHPs visiting aged care facilities.
- **ALP health policies** - Nicola Roxon MP, Shadow Minister for Health and Angela Pratt, Policy Adviser to Nicola Roxon MP. This discussion covered several aspects of health policy and Nicola has agreed to attend a meeting of the Management Group.
- **Higher education funding** - Stephen Smith MP, Shadow Minister for Education & Training. Stephen was interested in AHPA's view on cluster and pipeline funding and our submission to the HESA Review.
- **Health insurance** - Penny Shakespeare, Assistant Secretary, Private Health Insurance Branch, DoHA; Belinda Highmore, Director, Broader Health Cover Section, and two of her staff - Susan Rackstraw and Katrina Harmston. Discussed the proposed changes to private health insurance.
- **Aged care** - Senator Jan McLucas, Shadow Minister for Ageing, Disabilities and Carers. Discussed the additional funding announced by the government and changes AHPA would like to see in aged care policy.

AHPA's role in policy forums

During the past few months AHPA has nominated representatives to a range of strategic meetings and forums. Such requests included:

- a DoHA teleconference on allied health training and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- two Working Groups revising the National Standards for Mental Health Services
- the E-Health Conference: National Priorities in Accelerating Electronic Communications in the Health Sector
- a national forum on Indigenous Health Workforce issues
- the Inaugural National Health Workforce Forum organised by the Health Workforce Principal Committee
- a series of reference groups for Cancer Australia.

AHPA looks forward to welcoming more new members during 2007 and continuing to support allied health professionals throughout Australia by providing a national voice for allied health.