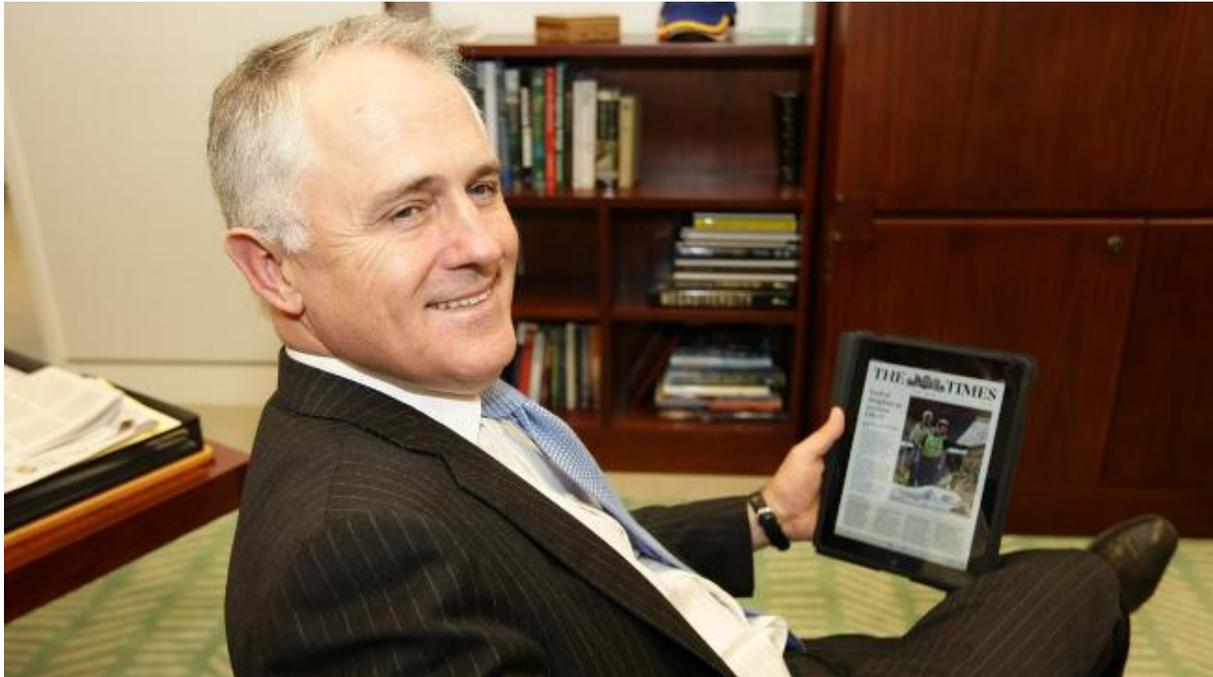


CPMC News

September – October 2015



The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, Prime Minister of Australia

On 14 September, 2015 Australia's 29th Prime Minister was sworn in at Government House. The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, member for Wentworth assumed his role as PM and went straight to Question Time with the existing front bench, offering them the opportunity to resign first before any changes occur. The PM has appointed Tony Nutt as his director of transition and Communications Department secretary Drew Clark as acting Chief of Staff. The new Ministry will be announced 21st and sworn in that day. Parliament rises from Thursday and returns 12 October.

The PM is known for his critical thinking, high intellect and ability to consult, and his views on the economy and consultation were delivered during his press conference shortly after his having won the ballot. However, while the health portfolio was the Achilles heel for the Abbott government given the unpopularity of many of the initiatives, the new PM has a blank page to work with. Lifting the freeze on the Medicare rebate was on the AMA's agenda, while others want a review of the private health insurance system and cite the recent events with the Calvary hospital group and Medibank Private as the tip of the iceberg, fearing a US style managed care system. General practice is arguing for new investment and the hospitals associations want a better coordinated system including some sort of thawing in Commonwealth-State funding relations. CPMC will argue for better coordinated medical workforce planning and assurances of transparency in the MBS review, two key matters that we took up with the Health Minister recently.

CPMC regular meeting with the Hon. Sussan Ley Minister for Health, Sport and Aged Care

CPMC Chairman Professor Michael Hollands and Health Minister Sussan Ley met to discuss the MBS Review, medical workforce and the Rural Health Continuing Education program.



On the MBS Review, the Department has released a Consultation paper reflecting the Turnbull government's clinician led review of all 5700 items on the Medicare Benefits Schedule as part of its plan to build a 'healthier Medicare'. This paper has a cut-off date of 9 November for submissions and you can find the link at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/consultation-mbsreviewtaskforce>

The Health Minister insists that the overhaul of the MBS is necessary in order to modernise it reflecting contemporary practice and to also allow for the removal of unnecessary items to make way for new ones. CPMC reinforced the concept of excellence and that any system reform must not occur at the expense of excellence in health care, while also acknowledging that the percentage of GDP spent on health cannot continue to rise exponentially.

The Rural Health Continuing Education program was discussed in the context of its merits and savings to government for providing excellence in access to specialist upskilling for individuals and Colleges. The Minister agreed that there was merit in giving consideration to how the program might continue beyond the cut off of 2016.

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The Minister and CPMC discussed workforce from the perspective of how best to address supply, demand for training positions and addressing geographic mal-distribution issues. A short discussion on STP occurred.

Ministerial responsibilities announced

Announced on 30 September 2015 and tweeted out to the membership, Minister Sussan Ley will take on the added responsibility as Minister for Aged Care to add to her portfolio of Health and Sport. Minister Fiona Nash will hold the portfolio of Rural Health Minister which includes rural and Indigenous health. Assistant Minister Ken Wyatt will hold the portfolio of assisting health minister and ageing. Education is the responsibility of Senator Birmingham with reviewing fee deregulation uppermost in his current work pile.

CPMC will seek meetings with Senator Nash and Assistant Minister Wyatt as a meet and greet with some invitations to attend relevant CPMC meetings.

Meeting with Health Secretary Martin Bowles 4 September 2015

Almost all of the CPMC membership attended the luncheon with Secretary Bowles in Sydney. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: workforce pressures and MBS Review. Professor Robinson was in attendance, with lead senior officer Fifine Cahill; and from the workforce perspective Deputy Secretary Wendy Southern and Ms Penny Shakespeare. Deputy Secretary Andrew Stuart also attended.



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Regarding workforce, the main issues raised were the pressures on the system from oversupply and maldistribution of doctors, and in particular:

- Graduate numbers – the Medical Deans have said it is the responsibility of government to plan the CSP places but there is an imperative to address this for the greater good of the system.
- Post-graduate Medical Education Councils – where its funding remains unresolved;
- Accessibility to the specialist training pipeline and demand is higher than capacity with statistics showing for some Colleges, 3.5 times the demand for available places;
- Alternative pathways to specialist training such as Career Medical Officers and lifetime registrars a suitable option in the suite to be considered for addressing Australia's doctor supply;
- Immigration Department still listing medicine as a 457 employer sponsored visa;
- Complicated interactions with hospitals.

The discussion included the need for government to mitigate the surplus and some suggestions were made as to how this might occur. Secretary Bowles indicated that the meeting was a special opportunity for better engagement and to communicate issues with a potential for some elements of workforce planning to be funded. He indicated that the issue of workforce would be lodged with the next AHMAC. He had instructed the Deputy Secretary's area to commence developing a strategy.

Regarding the MBS Review, Professor Robinson was supported by the senior officer, Ffine Cahill and reported on current status with regards to the 6000 items under review, and he gave some examples of why the review was necessary from his experience as a specialist. He also confirmed the clinical committees and timelines expected.

Review of the Specialist Training Program

As you may be aware, on 19 March 2015, the Minister for Health, the Hon Sussan Ley MP, announced a review of the STP and EMP in 2015, including stakeholder consultation, to inform reform in these programs from 2017. The Department has sent the discussion paper around to all Colleges and has informed they will conduct the review in two concurrent strands:

1. The department will look at the operational aspects of the STP and EMP in consultation with key stakeholders, and
2. The department with the assistance of a consultant will develop a potential methodology for the allocation of training posts from 2017 and beyond.

Is the focus shifting towards rural health and has the direction already been determined by Health? The discussion paper is open for comment for several weeks, and if necessary, contact Michael.Azize@health.gov.au if you have any queries.

Revalidation and CAMERA

The Medical Board of Australia has released its research report prepared by the University of Plymouth's Dr Julian Archer. Find it at:

<http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration/Revalidation.aspx>

As widely reported throughout the year this research has been occurring, the whole aim is to contribute to the development of a process of revalidation for medical practitioners.

It is anticipated that CPMC will closely work with the process and to start that off, a workshop is expected to be held in late November. A lead College President will be appointed to steer consideration and discussion on this important topic of regulation.

University fee deregulation

Breaking News where Education Minister Simon Birmingham has announced a delay to fee deregulation for at least a year having cited he is rethinking all aspects of a package to overhaul higher education – despite having been twice rejected in the Senate. Therefore any future arrangements will not commence until 2017 at the earliest.

Other News

- CPMC Annual General Meeting will be held within the 12 November CPMC meeting which is in Sydney at RACGP, North Sydney
- Medical Deans conference 8-10 October in Hobart:
<http://www.medicaldeans.org.au/conference/annual-conference/>
- Launch NICHEPortal by RACS on 23rd October includes a smoking ceremony. RSVPs to Simone Beyfus at RACS

Regards, Angela Magarry CEO