

9 May 2007

### **Increased funding per student welcome but won't fully train Doctors**

Medical Deans have welcomed the Federal Government's budget initiatives for higher education, describing the \$5 billion Higher Education Endowment Fund (HEEF) for infrastructure as "a huge step in the right direction," but called on Minister for Education Julie Bishop to direct some of its earnings to the clinical training of Australia's next generation of doctors.

"There are welcome increases in funding per medical student in the Budget, and we strongly applaud them," Medical Deans chair Professor Allan Carmichael said.

But the urgent need for more clinical infrastructure to train doctors in a wider range of settings in our hospitals, community and private clinics – remains.

"We agree with Prime Minister Howard who said on radio this morning that infrastructure includes the ability of people to think and to learn and to contribute to a knowledge economy."

"That is the right interpretation. This is about human capital as well as physical. We encourage the Government to allocate significant HEEF earnings to helping us maintain excellence and supply in the medical workforce."

Professor Carmichael said New Zealand research had showed that the funding support needed to train a doctor in clinical environments was perhaps double the current Australian allocation.

"Unless the true cost of training doctors is recognised, we will continue to struggle to maintain excellence and continue to have to import doctors from other countries," he said.

NOTE: Professor Carmichael was referring to today's AM program in which the Prime Minister indicated the infrastructure fund could be used for a range of purposes.

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s1918149.htm>, as follows:

"I mean, infrastructure is not just bitumen and pipes and drains, infrastructure is also the ability of people to think and to learn and to contribute to a knowledge economy." (Prime Minister John Howard, AM program, 9/5/07.)