



National Heart Foundation of Australia

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Commissioner Mike Woods
Health Workforce Study
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen ACT 2616

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Dear Commissioner,

Please regard this letter as a submission by the National Heart Foundation of Australia in response to the Productivity Commission's call for submissions relating to the *Australia's Health Workforce Position Paper*.

The Heart Foundation views the health workforce of Australia as one of the critical underpinning elements in achieving improved health outcomes for Australians. The Heart Foundation aims to "decrease the incidence of heart, stroke and blood vessel disease in the Australian population by increasing the use of proven treatments and promoting lifestyles that improve cardiovascular health". Our work, including our research priorities, has a focus on Australians who are at high or increased risk of cardiovascular disease, including those who live in rural areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those on low incomes and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

While the Heart Foundation has a specific interest in cardiovascular disease (CVD), we acknowledge that many of the issues relating to the health workforce will have a big impact on chronic disease more broadly. Health workers are critical gate keepers to information, resources and support which we regard as essential in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, as well as their traditional roles of diagnosis, treatment and management of existing CVD.

We support the thrust of the reform proposals outlined in the Position Paper. In particular we regard coordinated efforts to have workforce and financial arrangements that support delivery of health services by a range of health professionals as important. This is particularly relevant to the provision of advice and consideration of strategies with people who are at increased risk of CVD owing to the presence of multiple risk factors.

We also support strongly the proposals to strengthen the health workforce available to support rural and remote people, and those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. In terms of the burden of cardiovascular disease, both these groups have poorer health outcomes and lower access to both primary health care and specialist care than those living in metropolitan areas. We have great concerns about the impact of this on the incidence of cardiovascular disease.

Heartline 1300 36 27 87

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We look forward to the implementation of the proposed reforms outlined in the Commission's *Australia's Health Workforce Position Paper* and trust that the outcomes will prove successful in improving the health of Australians.

If you would like to clarify any issues in relation to our submission, please do not hesitate to contact me on (03) 9321 1594.

Yours sincerely,

Transmitted electronically

Dr Lyn Roberts
Chief Executive Officer - National