

The Hon. Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

The Hon. Mark Butler MP
Minister for Health

The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP
Minister for Skills and Training



14 May 2024

Dear Ministers Clare, Butler and O'Connor,

Re: Commonwealth Prac Payment Scheme

The combined medical radiation sciences are key professional areas instrumental in delivering diagnoses and treatment across a range of health conditions, in particular cancer. They include diagnostic imaging (DI) for x-ray, CT and MRI scans etc, nuclear medicine (NM), including theranostics, and radiation therapy (RT). The requirement for these services has expanded exponentially in recent years which, combined with the increase in centres delivering the services, has resulted in a chronic national workforce shortage. This has now become critical.

The recent ANZSNM Nuclear Medicine Workforce Summit (August 4, 2023) and the ASMIRT National conference (May 2024) both identified issues around training – in particular, the financial burden of rural, regional and interstate clinical placements.

We refer to your joint media release on 6 May 2024, announcing the establishment of the Commonwealth Prac Payment (CPP) scheme to support students undertaking higher education courses in nursing and midwifery, teaching and social work, and vocational education and training (VET) courses in nursing and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice. Whilst we applaud this scheme to recognise the shortage of healthcare professionals, we are most concerned that, despite the widespread (and worsening) shortage of DI's, NMTs and RTs across the country, and the professions being listed in the ANZSCO skills priority list, that students enrolled in courses in medical radiation science are not included in the new initiative.

Our students are required to undertake ~52 weeks of clinical placements throughout their 4-year undergraduate degree course. Unlike medical students, they are not provided with free accommodation, and they often have to relinquish their part-time, paid jobs to undertake these unpaid placements, particularly if the placements are in rural/regional locations or interstate. We have examples of students having to sleep in their cars, or in tents.

With the rapidly increasing number of medical radiation services performed, it is critical that we continue to support and supply a viable graduate workforce. We request the Government to consider the inclusion of Medical Radiation Science students in in the CPP scheme in order to support this flow. The investment in healthcare professionals (not just doctors and nurses) must be considered as a priority.

Carolyn Heyes
President ASMIRT
E: Presidentboard@asmirt.org

Professor Karen Jones
President ANZSNM
E: president@anzsnm.org.au

Suzanne McGavin
Chair ANZSNM
Technologist Special Interest Group
E: tsigchair@anzsnm.org.au