

# Undergraduate Medical Clinical Placements: Scoping Project *Update July 2007*

## *Background*

The Victorian Government recognises that whilst the imminent growth in medical students will have a positive impact upon the medical workforce in this state, it will also place significant pressure upon health services to meet the associated clinical placement demand. As such, the Department of Human Services (the department) has implemented a number of initiatives to help health services meet this growth.

One of these projects was establishing and coordinating the Clinical Placements Joint Planning Group (CPJPG), which was created to effectively manage the growth associated with the increased number of Victorian medical places. In particular, this group was given the responsibility to oversee the planning required to support the increase in clinical placements and to manage the demands on health service infrastructure and other resources. To inform the work of the CPJPG, Massaro Consulting Pty Ltd was engaged to undertake an undergraduate medical clinical placements scoping project.

The scoping report, submitted in October 2006 and published alongside this update, broadly identified and analysed the impact of the future medical students upon existing arrangements, including resource implications at health services. The project also examined opportunities and barriers to expand capacity within the health system. An additional outcome was the development of a statewide map outlining the proposed distribution of medical clinical placements in health services over the period 2007-12.

Subsequent to the report's submission, the department has undertaken further work with universities and health services to validate the collected data and to coordinate a statewide approach that aims to ensure adequate available clinical training places for all Victorian medical students. The continuing work of the department is summarised in this update.

## *Validation of statewide map*

The statewide map created for the scoping report was based upon data provided by universities and outlined the proposed allocation of Equivalent Full Time Student Load (EFTSL) in Victorian health services. To validate this information, in November 2006, the department requested that all identified public health services authorise the EFTSL proposed by universities. The responses informed the next stage of negotiations between key stakeholders and led to the creation of the final numerical map of student numbers (attachment 1). This map replaces the initial spreadsheet developed as part of the undergraduate medical clinical placements scoping project.

The dataset has become an invaluable tool that will be used to inform planning and initiatives across Victoria and will also inform other departmental clinical placements data projects, such as development of an IT system for clinical placements collection and analysis. Geographic diagrams showing the growth in medical students across the state from 2007-12 have also been developed (attachment 2).

## *Outcomes*

A number of issues were raised during the planning process including the need for universities to share health service resources, the availability of funding for capital infrastructure and the requirement of additional clinical teaching staff to meet demand.

### Health service resource sharing

One of the issues highlighted in the scoping report was the need for universities to share resources at a number of health services to ensure adequate clinical placements would be available across the state. A number of discussions were facilitated by the department to negotiate suitable arrangements between all parties.

A key health service involved in this process was Ballarat Health, which currently accommodates students from the University of Melbourne. The established Ballarat Rural Clinical School ensures that at least 25% of students from the University of Melbourne undertake a significant proportion of clinical training in rural areas, which satisfies federal funding requirements. Given the new Deakin University medical school is positioned in south-west Victoria, Ballarat Hospital was sought as a logical base for its students. Negotiations between all parties resulted in a compromise to ensure both universities could be accommodated at the site, with Deakin University undertaking the role of lead university.

The department facilitated similar negotiations between Bendigo Health, Monash University and the University of Melbourne. Bendigo hospital currently supports medical clinical placements from both Monash University and the University of Melbourne. Discussions confirmed that increased EFTSL numbers could be managed successfully provided a single curriculum, developed in conjunction between the two universities, could be taught.

Given Deakin University forewent placements at Ballarat Hospital, additional places were needed to ensure clinical placement requirements could be met. As Deakin University has an existing relationship with Eastern Health (placing nursing students at the health service), the department facilitated negotiations between Monash University, Eastern Health and Deakin University to secure medical clinical placements at Box Hill Hospital. Monash University will remain the lead university. Although the Deakin University curriculum is primarily a rurally based model, the Commonwealth approved the requirement to provide clinical training placements in metropolitan Melbourne, allowing students to experience a wider variety of health service models.

### Funding for infrastructure support

The scoping report highlighted that some of the capacity limitation issues in health services relate directly to the availability of funding for infrastructure and staffing support.

Statewide funding of \$32.5 million (to date) has been allocated over 3 years to support health services that will be significantly impacted by the growth in clinical placements. To inform the most efficient and equitable distribution of this funding, the department requested health services identify any physical resource and capacity implications associated with the new growth in medical students. This knowledge provided the background to inform further decisions about the allocation of funding.

It has recently been announced that this funding will be provided directly to universities so that funds can be subsequently allocated to health services as part of an integrated approach for each rural curricula. This maintains the flexibility to adjust funding amounts to health services depending upon actual student flows in future years and ensures the funds can be used alongside other sources of funding, notably from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training and Department of Health and Ageing.

As such, State Government funding has been allocated viz:

- \$5.1 million to Monash University (Churchill campus) to support 40 additional Commonwealth supported places (CSPs).
- \$18.1 million to Deakin University (Waurin Ponds campus) to support 120 additional CSPs.
- \$8.94 million to support the NVRMEN collaborative arrangement between Monash University and the University of Melbourne to support 60 additional CSPs.

A series of conditions will be attached to the funds to ensure that the department maintains control of the expenditure and that investment matches the requirements identified by the health services. As such, funding will be prioritised for investment in infrastructure that will directly enhance the quality of teaching and learning facilities available to students and academic staff. The allocated funds will be used by health services to coordinate clinical training programs through development and improvement of educational facilities. As such the funds will be allocated to construct new learning spaces (for example lecture theatres, tutorial rooms and demonstration rooms), to refurbish and expand pre-existing infrastructure, and to provide equipment such as computers, library resources and manikins (for simulation), all of which will enhance the quality of the learning experience.

#### Rural clinical academics

Additional State Government funding of \$7.6 million has been allocated for the three financial years to 2009/2010 to assist health services establish the clinical academic staffing and infrastructure required to deliver medical clinical placements in rural locations. In addition, a further \$3.23 million per annum in ongoing funding has been allocated for continuing support. It is intended that the funding will be used to support staff responsible for the student training experience and the clinical teaching program and, where appropriate, to establish physical infrastructure required to support these staff.

Discussions will commence shortly with universities to determine the current availability of clinical teaching staff and to scope the future requirements to provide and support high quality training in health services. Priority will be given to rural clinical infrastructure associated with the new medical schools in Western (Deakin University Waurin Ponds), Central-north (NVRMEN) and Eastern Victoria (Monash University Churchill). It is considered that the funding will support new clinical training positions in health services and not supplement existing academic posts currently funded by universities.

Once the initial requirements are determined, additional specific consultation will occur with identified stakeholders to develop the final statewide plan. The distribution of funding to health services and associated universities will be determined upon the proportional growth in student numbers and the identified needs across the state. The payment mechanisms will be based upon joint agreements between health services and universities.

#### *Looking forward*

The department recognises that adopting a more strategic, statewide approach to the planning and resourcing of clinical training will potentially expand capacity for all health undergraduate students. As such, the department is working on a range of initiatives to help health services meet the growth, with the aim to promote more efficient, effective and sustainable models for the department's organisation, allocation and delivery of clinical placements into the future.

The overarching framework for these initiatives is outlined in the Clinical Placement Strategy that will be published later this year. The aim of this strategy is to adopt a more cohesive and strategic, approach to the planning and resourcing of clinical training across Victoria, and to expand capacity for undergraduate and Vocational Education and Training (VET) students. The key components of this framework include:

- Planning and evidence: support for research to inform future directions in clinical training, initiatives to improve the quality and scope of data collections and establishment of joint planning processes.
- Capacity building: the development of IT systems, tools and resources to help health services better organise, allocate and deliver clinical placements.
- Improve funding structures: the development of funding models that better align placement activity and funding levels and supporting negotiations for increased funding of health education.

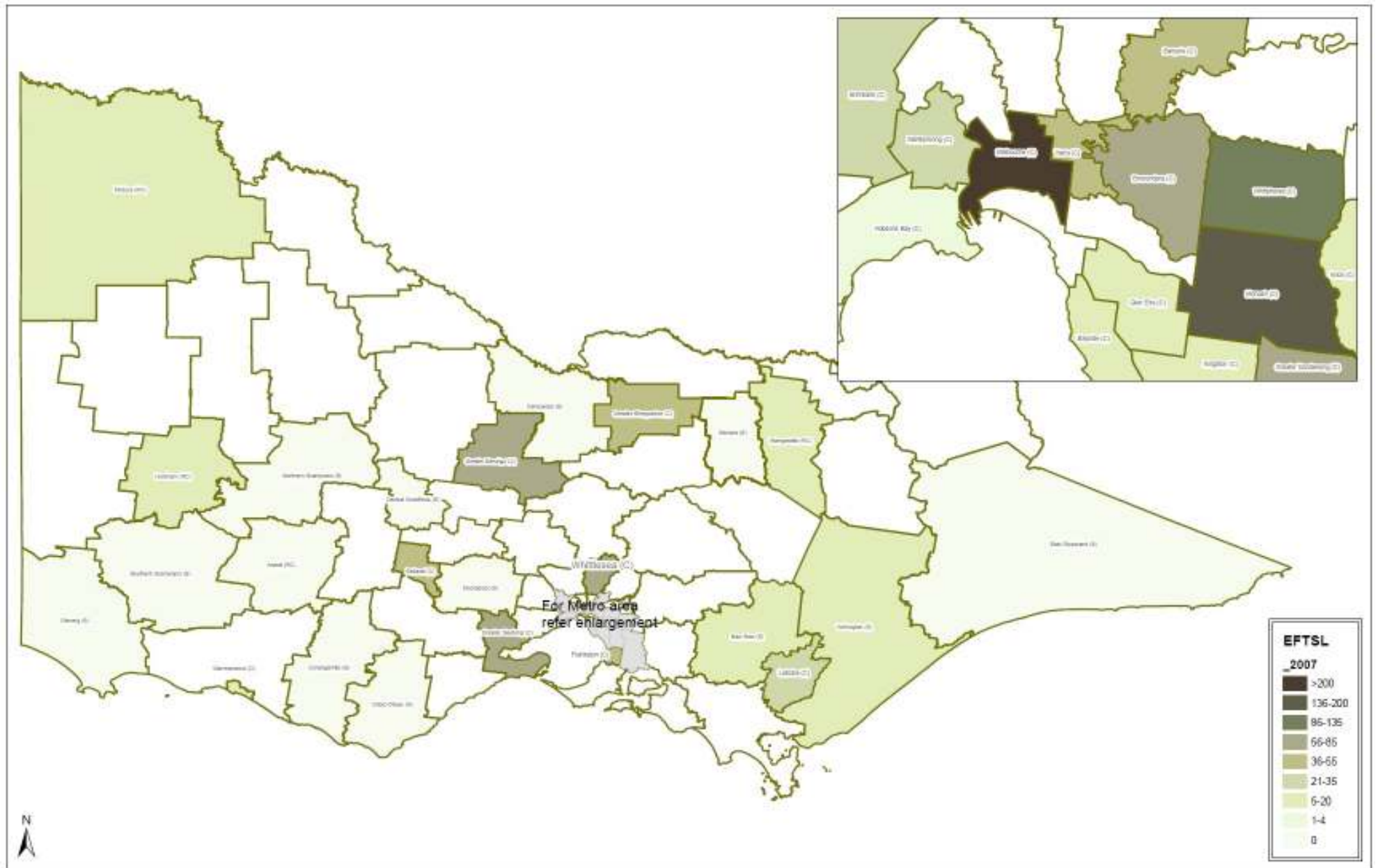
- Relationship and governance: establishing and maintaining effective relationships between health and education stakeholders to promote optimal design, allocation and delivery of clinical placements into the future.
- Promoting innovation: funding projects that explore clinical placement capacity and more effective training models, and examining alternative training modalities for use in undergraduate and VET education (such as clinical skills simulation).

The department will continue to implement initiatives outlined in this strategy to ensure adequate clinical training is available and that Victorian clinical placements efficiently and effectively prepare students to deliver healthcare in a context of evolving service models and increasing public and practitioner expectations.

The undergraduate medical clinical placements scoping report was a significant outcome of the CPJPG. Given the imperative to accommodate student growth for all health disciplines, similar scoping projects for allied health (phase 1) and nursing (division 1 and division 2) are currently underway. These investigations will provide a detailed analysis of current clinical placement capacity and identify potential opportunities to expand training availability across all health service types and models. This comprehensive evidence base will be used to inform departmental planning and key negotiations for capacity building within the system into the future.



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