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Govt admits to 'co-funding' plan for GP training

Paul Smith and Tessa Hoffman | 15 March, 2016 | 7 comments Read Later

The Federal Department of Health has admitted drawing up a confidential paper on getting practices to “co-fund” GP registrar training places — but denies it is a secret plot.

On Tuesday, it emerged that department officials **had handed a discussion paper on training reform** to the AMA, RACGP and ACRRM.

No details have been released, but *Australian Doctor* understands the paper includes two options on industry co-funding the cost of 300 extra GP registrar places, which were originally announced in the 2014 federal Budget.

One option is apparently for corporate practices to take on training these registrars without receiving the government’s practice teaching allowance.

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In return, these registrars would be bonded to the practice after they gain fellowship for a fixed period.

Australian Doctor has yet to find out how long this bonded period would be.

Another less radical option allegedly being touted in the paper is for a corporate to take on registrars but with only 50% of the practice teaching allowance.

But the registrar would spend a longer period with the corporate during their training in return.

General Practice Supervisors Australia has accused the government of “secretly” planning to abolish independent regulation of GP training, with the corporates becoming de facto regional training organisations.

The health department has denied these claims.

It admitted the existence of a discussion paper “on possible mechanisms for increasing GP training places in partnership with business and the medical profession”.

“Documentation” had been given to the AMA, RACGP and ACRRM for comment it said, but for “probiy reasons, these stakeholders have been required to sign a Deed of Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest”.

“No decisions have been taken by the government at this stage, beyond those announced in the 2014/15 Budget,” a department spokeswoman added.

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However, she stressed: "Under any new model, all training organisations will be required to attain and maintain accreditation, to ensure the training and education of GP registrars meets RACGP and/or ACRRM standards and curriculum.

"GP training will continue to be delivered through an 'apprenticeship' model, with most training of registrars occurring in their practice under the supervision of a qualified GP."

Competition for GP training places among pre-vocational doctors has escalated in recent years with the growing number of medical graduates.

The RACGP recently said that in 2014, one in three doctors applying for the Australian General Practice Training Program did not receive a training place.

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