



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Overseas Trained Doctors

SPEECH

Monday, 18 October 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Georganas, Steve, MP

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Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (7.27 pm)—I would like to commend the member for Maranoa for his interest in and promotion of good health care and a sound health workforce throughout Australia, particularly in regional and rural Australia. Parts of Australia continue to cry out for additional professionals. Doctors and other health professionals are one such group. This group is naturally central to the ongoing health and function of every community. It is well and good that this Labor government has moved to integrate state based labour markets, each with its own registration processes and lists of professionals eligible to practice, into a seamless national labour market.

Instead of a health professional working in Perth, for instance, being able to freely move interstate and take up a position in regional New South Wales, rural Queensland or rural South Australia, medical professionals have long suffered the inconvenience of having to register in each and every state in which they want to practice their profession. It would be ridiculous in this day and age to continue down that track. When people reminisce about the great economic structural and social reforms of the past—for example, the floating of the dollar in the eighties, enterprise bargaining and productivity increases of the early nineties—it is really quite odd to think that until only a couple of years ago we had seven quite distinct economies and workforces. They were partitioned by state regulation, constitutional limitation and, at least to a certain extent, by professional confinement or restriction.

It is only in the last couple of years that the obvious has been undertaken—that is, to make Australia one country, one seamless national economy. Nothing could be more obvious than the removal of marginally significant parochial borders to facilitate smooth economic activity. A mobile workforce is essential to the smooth allocation of resources to where they are most in demand, where they are most needed. Before I finish on a seamless national economy, I would like to congratulate Dr Craig Emerson and the Hon. Chris Bowen for their work in this area in the last parliament. It might not be a sexy area of public policy for most people but I rank it up there with the best. They are the most sound and most obvious examples of national leadership that we may have seen in this place for many a year.

Going back to the motion before us, let me say that it was a Labor government that brought the nation together, developed and nurtured the requisite goodwill amongst interested parties and forged the agreement to nationalise the professional accreditation boards of the various health professions. The responsible minister, Nicola Roxon, should also be congratulated for this milestone in Australia's economic and social development.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. DGH Adams)—Order! The time allotted for this debate has expired. The debate is adjourned and the resumption of the debate will be made an order of the day for the next sitting.

A division having been called in the House of Representatives—

Sitting suspended from 7.31 pm to 7.47 pm