



ANZCA
FPM

17 February 2025

Counsel Assisting the Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding
Via email contact.hfi@specialcommission.nsw.gov.au

Dear Counsel

NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding – request for information

Thank you for the opportunity to be involved with the Special Commission over the last two years via submission development, information gathering meetings, witness statements, hearing involvement and feedback opportunities.

Further to this and not raised to date, we believe it's crucial that the Special Commission request information from NSW Health to be made publicly available relating to the financial cost and quantity of locums being routinely engaged across the state to supplement systemic workforce shortfalls.

It is well known that the use of locum staff across all disciplines and all levels of staff is extensive across public hospitals in NSW with significant financial impost on the health budget. The number (and significant salary payment) of locum positions being advertised by recruitment companies is a testament to this. In some areas, health services are known to be a "locum delivered service" (consultant and registrar). However, we are aware that even our heads of departments are prevented from viewing their own locum financials as part of their roles in managing their department's budget as this information is withheld from them by health service management. We recognise the figure would be significant, especially when compared to the cost of an equivalent employed staff specialist.

In the meantime, requests for solutions to replace and fill staffing vacancies are rejected by health service leadership and NSW Health executives on the grounds of "excessive expenditure", and presumably commitment of longer-term expenditure. These solutions would redirect the excessive funds being used on locums and help support an increased public hospital workforce to provide longer-term system-wide benefit to NSW.

It would be valuable for the Special Commission and NSW stakeholders to understand the "\$X amount of public, tax-payer money spent on locum staff, when the equivalent cost for public hospital employed substantive staff could be \$Y".

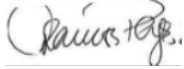
The recent NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) 2024 Anaesthetic Workforce Survey identifies 80 per cent of respondents have funded vacant senior medical officer (SMO) positions and 24 services reported funded, vacant staff specialist positions totalling almost 60 FTE (one third of positions were vacant for over one year). This calls for better utilisation of salary costs for salaried positions rather than locums and casual staff, targeted recruitment and retention strategies that make staff specialist roles attractive and rewarding careers.

The Special Commission has the mandate to request this information to help inform the final Inquiry report, awareness in the community and a more compelling reason for meaningful change. This is a crucial component of the Inquiry's scope - Inquiry into *Healthcare Funding*.

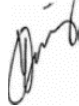
Ideally this figure would be per local health district (LHD) by department, or a total figure for each LHD, but in reality, a state-wide figure would be sufficient in this lack-of-information environment.

We're happy to discuss this further at your convenience.

Yours sincerely



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