

Australian Medical Association

7 March 2008

Dear Senator Ludwig

Thank you for your letter to the President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, providing the opportunity to comment on the Job Capacity Assessment Program. Dr Capolingua has asked me to respond on her behalf.

The AMA's scope to comment on the program is limited due to the unavailability of the Job Capacity Assessment Guidelines, which the AMA understands are not publicly available. We are unclear as to how the advice of a medical practitioner is treated when it conflicts with the advice provided to Centrelink by a non-medical health practitioner.

The AMA would be concerned if there is scope for a Job Capacity Assessor to disagree with the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner in regard to a client's capacity to work. While the AMA welcomes the types of support the program offers clients, we would be concerned if there was the capacity for a non-medically trained person to over-ride the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner. The AMA would be interested to know in more detail what process is followed when this kind of situation arises.

The AMA would also like some assurance that assessors would not be assessing clients with issues outside their particular field of expertise, for example a physiotherapist assessing a patient with psychological issues. Your advice on the mechanisms in place to ensure this does not happen would be welcome.

The AMA appreciates the opportunity to comment and looks forward to working with you to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure quality assessments and appropriate referrals to services are provided to people with barriers to work.

Yours sincerely

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