



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Swan Electorate: Curtin University**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 13 February 2012**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 13 February 2012	<b>Source</b> House
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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Irons, Steve, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (10:36): I rise to speak on the proposal for a medical school of Curtin University to be established in my electorate of Swan. Ensuring adequate health care is provided to my community is something that I see as not only very important but imperative. Supporting our universities to grow and improve their services also provides huge benefits to our community. Curtin University has submitted a proposal to the federal government that will see a number of benefits to my electorate and to our health system. I stand to support this proposal. Curtin University has a long and proud history of providing high-quality health education. The university already educates more health professionals than any other Western Australian tertiary institution. Expanding Curtin's health education facilities will add to what is already a professional and well-regarded institution.

The proposal for a new medical school is particularly important given the growing evidence of a shortage of doctors in Australia. I note that shortages have been a significant problem for some time in my home state of Western Australia, especially in rural WA, where more than half of all doctors are overseas trained. It is clear that we need to grow the number of new doctors to keep up with the growing demands of our health system. A 2009 report in the *Medical Journal of Australia* showed that by 2025 Australia will need to import 25 per cent of its medical workforce if the current level of medical student placements is maintained. The National Health Workforce Taskforce has predicted that an additional 356 medical student placements would be needed from 2010. I note that Western Australia, being Australia's fastest growing state, will be in particular need of new doctors.

Curtin is proposing a five-year direct entry undergraduate bachelor of medicine and a bachelor of surgery, commencing in 2014. This new school will ensure a much needed increase in the number of new doctors entering the WA system. The new undergraduate degree will produce graduates for areas of particular need. As Curtin's vice-chancellor, Jeanette Hackett, has said, this issue is not just about numbers but about ensuring that we have the right skills in the right places. A recent inquiry report by the health department and Rural Health West highlighted that WA is facing a shortfall of up to 100 rural doctors. I also note comments made by the president of the Rural Doctors Association of Australia that Australia was becoming too dependent on foreign doctors and that instead we should invest more in training domestic medical students.

Establishing clinical schools in priority rural locations and focusing on securing placements in regional and remote area hospitals are key parts of this proposal. This should aid the bid by the WA Department of Health to attract more medical graduates to these under-resourced areas. This new facility will help meet the growing demand for health professionals and will provide lasting benefits to my electorate and the people of Western Australia. I urge the federal government to support the proposal for the Curtin University medical school.