



### SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS IN AUSTRALIA

The Philippine Embassy in Canberra has reported on the shortage of doctors in Australia which has reached crisis point. According to the report, the Federal Department of Health and Ageing has declared “districts of workforce shortage,” of over 74 per cent of Australia or 59 per cent of the population. This translates to three quarters of the country’s land area and more than 12 million of its people now deemed as lacking adequate access to primary care. The worsening shortage of doctors is likely to deepen given the fact that the states often declare an area of need based on their inability to fill a public sector vacancy, over a much larger area than the Commonwealth.

The shortage of doctors becomes evident to Australians as government authorities rely more heavily on overseas trained doctors. The federal declarations allow the Department to exempt temporary resident overseas trained doctors from rules that would otherwise prevent them from practicing their profession. The number of exemptions given each year has almost doubled since 2005 to total 4,148 in October of 2007 and General Practitioner (GP) clinics in suburban areas are relying on the process as a favored recruitment method.

An analysis of the GP workforce by the federal Government’s own medical workforce agency in 2005 showed that the shortfalls were so marked that it would take between 1,100 and 1,200 new entrants into general practice every year from 2007 to 2013 before the situation could be reversed.

Despite the new stringent regulations imposed on the 457 visa which has almost blocked new applications, the Philippine Embassy expects that the recruitment of overseas workers will continue, given the severe shortage of qualified workers not only in the field of healthcare, but also in mining and construction.