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# ■ PRESIDENT REPORT ■

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**Dr Ross Cartmill**  
President

## A time for new beginnings

Last month was time for new beginnings: spring temperatures began to augur scorching summer days, magpies launched their full-scale air assault on innocent pedestrians, and Queensland welcomed its first female Premier.

There is no doubt that Anna Bligh has big shoes to fill, not least because she still faces crises in water, council amalgamations, transport, and health.

Whilst I have extended my congratulations to Ms Bligh on her new appointment, I have made it clear that Queensland's health crisis did not end with Peter Beattie's term.

Queensland's public health system is still grossly inadequate; hospitals remain short staffed, bed numbers are completely insufficient, and we still harbour enormous concerns about how our future doctors will be trained.

Spring has clearly heralded a new era for Queensland politics, and hopefully a new era for the State's health system.

I hope the days of blaming the Federal Government for the State's ills are over, and that Bligh's Government will continue to work closely with the medical profession to rebuild Queensland's health system.

In what can only be described as a rearrangement rather than a major cabinet reshuffle, it was pleasing to see Stephen Robertson, with whom we have built a good working relationship, remain as Health Minister.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Lindy Nelson-Carr to the position of Minister for Communities, and thank the outgoing Minister Warren Pitt for the passion and commitment he brought to the role, particularly where Mental Health was concerned.

I am hopeful our new Premier's background in education will mean we will finally see some workable solutions to the looming crisis in the

education and training of our next generation of doctors.

By 2013 the number of intern places per year we will require will double, and similar increases in vocational training places will also be required.

In the past 12 months there has been too much argument about whom – State/Territory or Commonwealth Governments – is retrospectively responsible for the current medical workforce shortages.

History is a matter of perception, and the time for finger pointing is over. All governments must work to put in place plans and resources that will support the training of our future

medical workforce.

In early September I attended the Queensland Health Medical Workforce Advisory Committee Think Tank. It is pleasing that the AMA has been involved in many of these initial discussions, and I am buoyed by Queensland Health's willingness to work with the profession to find solutions to medical education and training.

However, I am concerned that evidently the fight to retain control of our profession needs to be fought on many fronts. The struggle to do so, with governments firmly set on seizing control of registration and accreditation, also threatens to engulf education and training.

The Model presented at the 'think tank' for discussion was clearly Queensland Health oriented and controlled.

I expressed my concern that although Queensland Health does have a financial responsibility for some training, in order to maintain consistent and appropriate standards, the profession must maintain its autonomy.

We must resist sliding down the slippery slope on which our colleagues in the United Kingdom have found themselves.

I did make my concerns clear about the need for a profession-led model and I was encouraged to see the model amended. I cannot stress enough the importance of the profession being involved in these early rounds of discussion, and I thank Queensland Health for seeking our input.

The future of our health system must be profession-led.

We will not achieve this if our profession continues to remain fragmented. The more that no one knows what we want, the less we are likely to achieve.

With a federal election looming, now is the time to focus on the important policy issues and to emphasise what the profession knows healthcare in Australia needs. ■

