



Workshop: Maintaining high standards and high workforce participation – mutually exclusive or sustainable?

Friday 5 September 2008

Approximately 20 participants – including federal and state government representatives, employer groups, university and private educator representatives, other professional and union groups and senior sonographers attended the ASA's facilitated workshop on workforce issues "Maintaining high standards and high workforce participation – mutually exclusive or sustainable?". The atmosphere was positive, presentations given by a diverse range of attendees were relevant and of a high standard, and participation was strong.

The key objectives were to:

1. Bring together a geographically diverse group to encourage dialogue
2. Expose major issues
3. Establish agreement on a general direction
4. Identify specific further work required to progress in that direction.

For the purposes of structure, the workshop was divided into three sessions:

1. Recruiting trainee sonographers
2. Training and clinical education
3. Workforce retention.

1. Recruiting trainee sonographers

Although the session title focused on recruiting trainees, speakers and discussions also canvassed issues associated with recruiting qualified sonographers. Group discussion focused on barriers to recruitment, effective recruitment techniques and changes needed to improve recruitment.

Recommendations:

- That the ASA facilitate the development of standards for clinical trainers/supervisors
- That the ASA seek partners to assist in the promotion to employers the benefits of providing entry level clinical training and the value of recognising trainers.

2. Training and clinical education

This session was expected to be contentious with presentations and discussions around the recruitment of overseas practitioners, an undergraduate ultrasound qualification and the partnering of private educators with employers and universities to fast-track students. The group work and reporting back provided significant relevant information.

Recommendations:

- That the ASA lead the development of a plan for sonography education (pre and post entry level)
- That the ASA develop an education plan and strategy to promote it to stakeholders and governments.

3. Retention

Due to time constraints the number of topics covered during the retention session were limited. Presentations were broader than the issues considered during group sessions and the different experiences in the public and private sectors, whilst acknowledged, was not highlighted. The major topics covered were reducing work injury risk and career paths. The degree of agreement regarding extended scope roles was strong, and discussions provided a solid basis on which further refinement of potential models could be based.

Recommendations:

- That the ASA promote debate on the development of career opportunities for sonographers in research and teaching, as well as extended scope in clinical practice
- That the ASA collaborate with the HSU to develop a framework for advancement within the current scope of practice of the profession.