[Address]

[Date]

To the office of:

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP NSW Minister for Health

The Hon. Bronwyn Taylor MLC NSW Minister for Mental Health

RE: NSW psychiatry registrar underpayment and implications for workforce planning

I would like to bring your attention to three related matters of significant concern in regards to remuneration conditions within psychiatry training, and identify these as potential significant contributors to workforce shortages in both psychiatric trainees and consultants. I understand the NSW Association of Psychiatry Trainees have written letters in support of this issue with full details.

In NSW registrars working in psychiatry can earn up to $20,000 a year less than another colleague in the same role. This difference relates to the number of years of employment experience that doctor has had post-graduation (referred to as e.g. ‘PGY2’ denoting a doctor in their second year post-graduation), however this experience is not usually within psychiatry and hence does not contribute to significant differences in skills or performance.

[if you have been underpaid here could add e.g. I started work at xxx hospital as a PGY2 doctor working alongside colleagues doing the exact same role earning $20,000 more]

This discrepancy arises due to issues of terminology and definitions within the NSW award. In hospital practice, registrar is a term defined by the role undertaken. However in the NSW award the term is defined as follows:

**"Registrar"** means a medical officer who:

(i)  has had at least three years' experience in public hospital service as defined under this Award or any lesser period acceptable to the Ministry of Health, and

(ii)  is appointed as a registrar by a hospital, and

(iii)  is occupying a position of registrar in an established position as approved by the employer.

This compares unfavourably with Awards in other states such as Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory in which registrars are defined by their role, and not post-graduate experience.

Furthermore it is noted that the award rates in NSW when compared against other states are lower. For example Victoria is a directly comparable state in which a 1st Year Registrar earns a salary of $112988 compared with the aforementioned $99218 in NSW.

Finally, each psychiatry trainee must undertake a mandatory formal education course to complete their training. In NSW this is offered by 2 higher education institutions at costs ranging from approximately $25-35000 over 3 years depending on a number of factors. However in other states, these education courses are often offered for free or at a nominal (e.g. $500 per year) cost to the trainee.

As you will be aware there are a significant number unfilled psychiatry training positions within NSW, and a subsequent effect of psychiatrist shortages. These issues have gained recent media attention with the potential impact of diminishing public trust in the profession. When reviewing the highlighted facts above, it is reasonable to assume that one potential contributor to the workforce shortages in psychiatry in NSW are the discrepancies in salary and expenditure. This has certainly been our experience in regards to anecdotal evidence from psychiatry trainees who have sought employment outside of NSW.

I request your support in changing the award definitions of a registrar in NSW such that all doctors working in a registrar role are paid at registrar rates, regardless of previous experience. An alternative may be to follow the example set by Western Australia, in which there is a separate award for doctors working in psychiatry.

[If you would like to add a paragraph about personal experience/circumstances e.g. if you have children or dependents and have been in financial hardship add here]

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided. This issue is also being addressed by the NSW Association of Psychiatry Trainees who can be contacted on nswpsychtrainees@gmail.com.

[your name]