
Politician vs. Bogan • The Australian preferential voting system • AMSA report

Healthy debate to win your vote

Election Day is just around the corner, so this week *The Medic* interviewed the candidates running for the Hobart seat of Denison in the House of Representatives. Andrew Wilkie (Independent), Jane Austin (Labor) and Anna Reynolds (Greens) gave their views on some important health issues (Tanya Denison, the Liberal candidate, was also contacted, but did not submit her responses by the print deadline). Who will get your vote?

Question 1: How will you ensure in the long term that all graduates of UTAS, domestic and international, are guaranteed an internship in Tasmania each year?

This question is an important one for all medical students, including those in the pre-clinical years, because while the internship crisis is becoming old news, there remains no plan for a long term solution at any level of government. Every year, the future of graduating medical students, particularly international students amid the smorgasbord of State Government-imposed priority systems, is left up in the air as they fight for the jobs that they need in order to continue to practise medicine in Australia. Health Workforce Australia predicts that if no solution is found, there will be a shortage of 2,700 doctors in Australia by the year 2025. The internship crisis is primarily a State Government funding issue but the short-sightedness of the Federal Government is disappointing, each year choosing to swoop in and fund new places at the last minute instead of offering a long term solution. It is time for the Federal Government to show leadership and prevent this issue from resurfacing every year; if not for moral reasons then for economic ones, because it does not make economic sense to provide

extra funding every year indefinitely without solving the problem, nor to spend money on the training of medical students who are then unable to practise medicine in Australia.

Andrew Wilkie:

“In the short term I think the Tasmanian Government should guarantee internships for all graduating UTAS medical students who wish to stay on in Tasmania. Over the longer term I think the Federal Government should move to create a national system for allocating medical internships to ensure that all graduating medical students have the certainty of getting an internship wherever they most want to work and are most needed.”

Jane Austin:

“I think that wherever possible we should keep our Tasmanian graduates working in Tasmania. All eligible Australian-trained medical graduates who applied for an internship for 2013 were offered an internship position, which was made possible by extra funding from the Federal Labor Government last September. Recently the Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek, announced \$8 million to increase the number of internships in rural areas. This funding will be provided to hospitals to create positions for overseas-born students who train in Australia. It is expected this will create an extra 60 medical internships every year.”

Anna Reynolds:

“The Greens believe that all medical graduates from Tasmania should have the opportunity to undertake an internship here, and would work with Federal and State governments to ensure appropriate funding of the Tasmanian health system to ensure sufficient places for internship and training positions.”

Question 2: Will you ensure the Commonwealth honours its commitment to provide 0.7% of gross national income in foreign aid?

In 1970, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly made the commitment that “each economically advanced country will progressively increase its official development assistance to the developing countries and will exert its best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7 percent of its gross national product at market prices by the middle of the decade.” Thirty years later, in the year 2000, all 189 member states of the UN, including Australia, agreed on eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were established to work towards the elimination of global poverty and hunger and to create a global partnership for development. With the establishment of the MDGs, the members of the UN reinforced their recommendations that developed nations spend 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) on foreign aid.

Australia’s aid program focuses on the Asia Pacific region and its achievements include the elimination of polio from the Pacific region and the vaccination of 1.5 million children against measles in Papua New Guinea. Its work in Africa has provided clean water for almost 500,000 people in Tanzania, South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In 2009, just five nations had reached the UN target of 0.7% of GNI spent on foreign aid: Netherlands (0.82%), Denmark (0.88%), Luxembourg (1.04%), Norway (1.06%) and Sweden (1.12%). At that time, Australia spent 0.29% of GNI on foreign aid, and had made a commitment to reach

(continued on page 2)

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(continued from page 1)

0.5% by 2015-2016. Since then the Australian Government has pushed back their deadline to 2017-2018, stating that “the global recession has slowed development and progress towards achieving the MDGs”. Let’s find out how our potential representatives in Federal Parliament feel about the MDGs and Australia’s commitment to foreign aid...

Jane Austin:

“The overseas aid budget will reach \$5.7 billion in 2013-14, or 0.37% of GNI, and the Rudd Labor Government remains committed to reaching the target of 0.5% of GNI by 2017-18. The aid budget is the highest as a percentage of GNI that it has been in over 25 years and in dollar terms, Australia’s largest aid budget in history. Compare this to the Coalition – their overseas aid budget never reached 0.3% of GNI and was usually under 0.25%. If elected, I will work hard in Caucus to support efforts to achieve the 0.7% target. The Rudd Labor Government remains committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).”

Andrew Wilkie:

“I fully support the MDGs and Australia increasing its foreign aid budget to 0.7% of GNI by 2015. That we’re still so far off the mark is a reflection of the Government’s repeated “deferral” of planned aid increases whenever they need to make some budget savings. Australia is a rich country, and can afford to be a generous one. Increasing our foreign aid budget helps the world’s poorest people, fulfils our obligations to the UN under international agreements and creates a more stable and prosperous region which is ultimately in Australia’s diplomatic, economic and security interests.”

Anna Reynolds:

“The Greens are the only party that has been campaigning to increase Australia’s overseas aid commitment. We are committed to increasing Australia’s aid contribution to 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2020. We

have introduced a Bill into parliament that would place this target into law which would stop the constant raiding of the aid budget to fund other domestic political issue, such as the offshore detention of asylum seekers.”

Question 3: What are your priorities for the health sector in the coming years and why should we vote for you on September 7?

Jane Austin:

“I’m committed to a stronger, fairer health system for all Tasmanians. I believe in protecting Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and maintaining bulk billing. My priorities for the coming years include: increasing investment in mental health, facilitating a stronger conversation about the broader social determinants of health, making the most of the Menzies Research Institute to transfer local research into clinical practice, and using the NBN where possible to deliver results for Tasmanians.

I have a strong commitment and interest that comes from working in the mental health area for the past 10 years, and that’s why I’m part of a Labor Government with a solid and consistent record of investing in our healthcare system. The Labor Government has shown its continued commitment by creating and rolling out Medicare Locals across the nation. Under an Abbott-led Government they have already committed to cutting Medicare Locals. The former Coalition Government, with health under the direct responsibility of Tony Abbott, froze GP training places, leaving six in ten Australians living in suburbs and towns without enough doctors. The Australian Labor Party fundamentally believes that all Australians, regardless of their income, background or location, deserve access to high quality health care, when they need it, where they need it.”

Andrew Wilkie:

“The key health priority for Denison is clearing the waiting lists backlog. Unfortunately I don’t think the Tasmanian Government is up to the task so I have called for the Federal Government to take over Tasmanian public hospitals. I think that a shift to Federal Government control of public

hospitals is in the public interest nationwide as State Governments grapple with revenue shortfalls. My other priorities include: harnessing the promise of the NBN to deliver health services remotely, bringing dentist services onto Medicare, ensuring a quick and effective roll-out of DisabilityCare Australia, and increasing funding and services in mental health so they are given the same priority as blood and bone.

My commitment to health services isn’t in doubt. I made the Royal Hobart Hospital a central plank of my negotiations after the 2010 election and negotiated the \$325m health rescue package with the federal government in 2012. I’ll continue to hold a torch to the Tasmanian Government’s health performance because I think Tasmania has been living with a substandard health system for far too long now. In my experience the political parties are beholden to the bureaucracy; by contrast my focus is always on the public interest and not the political interest of a political party based in Canberra.”

Anna Reynolds: “The Greens made Denticare part of their agreement to form government with Julia Gillard, allowing 3.4 million kids to go to the dentist through a Medicare entitlement. The Greens will work to expand the coverage of the entitlement over 5 years, until everyone is covered. Our next priority is to put \$664 million back into Medicare, reversing cuts that have been made by Labor. In addition, we will announce \$1 billion of new programs in mental health as part of this election campaign.

Einstein once said that you cannot solve problems with the same mindset that created them. That’s why Australia needs more MPs from the Australian Greens in our parliament. With a stronger Greens team in the federal parliament we will be able to play an influential role as an alternative voice in our parliament in influencing the national debate. We can also work to amend laws, regardless of who is in government, to make them fairer and more focused on the future.”

Huw Jarvis

AMSA report

The second AMSA Council of 2013 was held on the Gold Coast over three days preceding convention, from July 5-7. The agenda and supporting documents were over 200 pages long, including 13 policies up for discussion, so to say it was a jam packed schedule would be an understatement. The AMSA Executive continue to work towards the six priorities determined at first council for the 2013 year:

1. Securing internships for all graduating medical students as defined in AMSA's Internship Policy.
2. Triggering action on mental health prevention and early intervention initiatives for all university students
3. Involving more medical students with AMSA
4. Working as one AMSA team

5. Recognising and celebrating the successes of all medical students, particularly our volunteers

6. Being sustainable, especially in a financial sense.

Congratulations to Georgina Taylor of UTAS for the passing of her policy advocating for open access to research. The finalised policies will be available for viewing on the AMSA website when the minutes for Second Council are released. Congratulations also to TUMSS President Max Milaney for being part of the successful Victorian bid team for the AMSA Executive 2014, we wish Max the best in his role next year.

We are all looking forward to September 11 when 500 medical students from around Australia

and abroad come to Hobart for the AMSA Global Health Conference. Congratulations to Huw Jarvis and Georgina Taylor and the rest of their team for their hard work on this over the past 18 months. If you missed out on registration, partial tickets are still available on their website (www.ghc2013.amsa.org.au) for a select number of social events – do not miss out again!

The third and final AMSA Council for 2013 will be held in Sydney in October, where I will be representing you for the last time. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any issue related to medical students, university students or health care in general.

Mark Fenton (TUMSS AMSA Rep)

Politician vs. Bogan

The following piece is satirical and the views of the characters do not represent the views of the author nor those of TUMSS.

Question 1: How will you ensure in the long term that all graduates of UTAS, domestic and international, are guaranteed an internship in Tasmania each year?

Politician:

“It is crucial that we keep Tasmanian graduates here by finding them internships elsewhere in Australia or internationally, so that they can get the experience they need to stay in Tasmania. One option we have been considering is temporarily extending the length of the degree by one year for some students, which will alleviate the pressure on the internship providers. In the long run we're interested in coordinating a national rotational system where we have the flexibility to strategically extend the length of the medical degree in whichever areas need it most.”

Bogan:

“Hang on mate, what internationals? I'm not racist or anything, but some of my mates hate it when one of them calls them up trying to sell them a phone contract or whatever, but honestly they need jobs too and I'm glad they've found something

they're good at. But you said there's a shortage of places for Aussie blokes so you've got to wonder what's going on when the government aren't looking out for their own.”

Question 2: Will you ensure the Commonwealth honours its commitment to provide 0.7% of gross national income in foreign aid?

Politician:

“Foreign aid is not merely about how much money is spent, but also how much of that money is spent. Our responsibility is firstly to taxpayers, and the difficulty with foreign aid has always been ensuring the best return for the taxpayer. We've got the think tanks, we've got a committee, people have been working on this for a long time, and what the polls are saying is just don't throw good money after bad. A particularly promising avenue we've been seriously looking at is buying the boats which are a huge source of risk for so many aid recipients.”

Bogan:

“We're pretty well off here in Australia so it's good that we're committed to helping out the less fortunate people who can't get a loan. Though if things get real tough you can always take some stuff to Cashies. The Government should put in a new Centrelink because if they're doing the whole 0.7%, the queue's going to be bloody outrageous.”

Question 3: What are your priorities for the health sector in the coming years and why should we vote for you on September 7?

Politician:

“I've actually been down at the Royal Hobart Hospital this week, rolling up my sleeves and talking to the patients about what they want. We're going to introduce an online queuing system, so that instead of being stuck there in the emergency room, patients can just come and go, pop over to the tobacconist for example or up to McDonalds, and be notified by SMS when there's a bed free. The NBN is going to be instrumental as well, because it will allow people in rural areas for example, to access online resources such as WebMD or Yahoo Answers. We're also planning a system which allows people to compare and book flights, if they opt to have surgeries in other countries.”

Bogan:

“My missus actually got pregnant about a month ago, so my priorities are basically about both of us cutting back on the ciggies, and you know, less bongs, we're committed to smoking a bit less and selling a bit more, and making sure we've got a bit of cab fare put away for getting her to the hospital when the baby comes, cos I lost my license.”

Andy Swift

Preference this!

Wikipedia's description of the Australian voting preference system reads like this: "full-preferential instant-runoff voting in single-member seats to elect the lower house, the House of Representatives, and the use of group-ticket, single-transferable proportional voting to elect the upper house, the Senate". It might as well say: "the Australian voting system is too complicated." And it is, but this may clear things up a little...

You vote 1 for the candidate you like most (or hate least). Your preferences then determine who gets your vote if your number 1 is out of the running. Preferences are distributed from the bottom up; all number 1 votes are counted first, then the candidate with the least is excluded and all the number 1 votes that candidate received are distributed to their number 2 option. This process repeats from the bottom up until either one candidate gets over 50% of the vote or there are only two candidates left - then we can finally find out the winner.

In an election between a shark, a kangaroo and a pelican, shark voters can decide that if the shark doesn't win they'd rather the kangaroo over the pelican. Imagine 20 people vote and 9 put pelican number 1, 8 go with the kangaroo and 3 vote 1 shark. The shark is excluded and shark votes get distributed, giving the kangaroo 11 while the pelican is still on 9. Therefore the kangaroo wins despite getting fewer number 1 votes than the pelican.

The Senate has both "above the line" and "below the line" voting. Above the line voting is easy: just put number 1 next to your preferred party or candidate and the preferences will sort themselves out according to "group voting tickets" submitted to the electoral commission by each of the Senate candidates before the election. You can find out where these preferences might flow by checking out your preferred Senate candidate's group voting ticket online at www.aec.gov.au/election/tas/gvt.htm or by asking a party representative at the polling booth on election day.

Below the line voting in the Senate

The health report with Duncan Sweeney

Increases to the tax on tobacco under the Rudd-Gillard ALP Government have been greeted by Tasmanian Minister for Health Michelle O'Byrne. With the highest smoking rates in the country, O'Byrne supported the move as one that will "add to the momentum we have created" with smoke free areas, especially in and around the Hobart waterfront precinct.

The AMA has released a 'Key Health Issues for Federal Election 2013' covering with what it believes are the important health-related issues

is much harder. If you vote below the line you must direct your own preferences by numbering every single box in order of your preference on the ballot paper. There are 54 candidates contesting the Senate this election, so if you're planning to vote below the line, maybe bring a snack.

The House of Representatives doesn't allow above the line voting so you have to number every box on the green House of Representatives ballot paper. Luckily there are only 10 candidates contesting Denison so it's much easier to make a choice. Parties and candidates still try to influence preferences by handing out "how-to-vote" cards suggesting their preferred way for voters to complete the ballot, but following these is strictly optional.

in the upcoming federal election. These range from patient-focussed (affordability, health care for Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders) to the more self-centred (self-education expense cap, medical workforce and training).

AMSA has called for to suspension of support for the formation of new medical schools. The AMSA President called increasing numbers of medical schools 'irresponsible' given that a shortage of jobs already exists, calling for money to instead be spent on increasing training positions.

Duncan Sweeney

The four main contenders for Denison in the House of Representatives this election are Andrew Wilkie (Independent), Jane Austen (Labor), Tanya Denison (Liberal), and Anna Reynolds (Greens). The Greens are asking their voters to preference Labor, then Andrew Wilkie then Liberal. Liberal are asking their voters to preference Andrew Wilkie, then Labor, then the Greens. And Labor are asking their voters to preference the Greens, then Liberal, then Andrew Wilkie. Andrew Wilkie isn't directing preferences on his how-to-vote card, instead asking his voters to complete the rest of the ballot according to their own personal preference.

Django Merope Synge and Huw Jarvis

AUSTRALIA'S PREFERENTIAL VOTING SYSTEM

