



Health training push scuppered

Siobhain Ryan

ONLY a fraction of the thousands of health training places promised for 2008 have been released, sabotaging Canberra's attempts to shore up Australia's under-staffed hospitals.

Kevin Rudd's vow to end the blame game on health has fallen foul of state bureaucracies, with all but one failing to get their

commonwealth-funded places for existing health workers up and running before the end of last year.

In July, the Rudd Government said demand for skilled staff in Australia's health system was so great that it would bring forward to 2008 the start date for 4500 of the 50,000 training places set aside for current health workers.

Seven months on, Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council chief executive officer Di Lawson said only South Australia was likely to achieve the end-of-year deadline.

"The frustrating part of this as the core tenet of the policy

Continued — Page 4

Health training scheme scuppered

From Page 1

was meant to be more responsiveness to industry," she said.

"We're industries that have desperate need, we have urgent need, and this is not unknown to the Government."

Ms Lawson said there were no definite figures on places released to registered training organisations by Christmas, "but my guess is it would be less than 1 per cent".

Only Western Australia and South Australia had managed to advertise last year for training organisations to co-ordinate the places last year, she said.

A spokeswoman for Education Minister Julia Gillard said all states and territories had signed memorandums of understanding to deliver their share of the 4500 health places announced at the Council of Australian Governments meeting in July. "Each state is at a different stage in

implementation," she said.

The spokeswoman also pointed to enrolments in a separate training program for job seekers, which started in April last year, saying one fifth of those places had gone to the community services and health sectors.

But a departmental breakdown of those enrolments show that while some areas of need — such as aged care — have attracted thousands of applicants, others have gone wanting. Only 29 people have enrolled for a Diploma of Nursing, and only 24 were down for another area of shortages, the Allied Health Assistance certificates.

"On the numbers coming through, there are some areas (of training) that we are lacking," Ms Lawson said.

Mathias Cormann, acting Opposition health spokesman, said the Rudd Government was now "way behind schedule" with

most of the major health reforms it promised before the election.

"Not having delivered on the critically important boost to our health workforce for 2008 is just another example of Labor's lack of progress in the health portfolio in its first year in office," he said.

The early failure in the Prime Minister's new "co-operative federalism" comes as the Government prepares to release a major report on health reform and weighs its options for a federal takeover of state health systems.

It promised ahead of the election to decide by the middle of the year on whether the states and territories had lifted their game on health, or whether to demand new constitutional powers for Canberra to take financial control over Australia's 750 public hospitals.