



Busy year ahead



By John Zorbas
President of the West Australian Medical Students' Society

It's been a busy start to the year for UWA medical students and it's only going to get busier with the return of the pre-clinical students in March. The calendar is packed to the brim, with several upcoming events to keep students informed and entertained. In mid February, WAMSS held its second Committee Getaway at Ern Halliday Recreation Camp in Hillarys and it was a great success. Members had time to sit down with the executive, organise their plans for the year and set timelines for their various portfolio projects. I'm very keen to see these plans unfold during the year. The WAMSS Fresher Camp was held the following weekend and 76 first year students headed to Dwellingup for their orientation into their future university

lifestyles. This year the camp was open to all students of our faculty, instead of just medicine and dentistry students. With the help of the University Dental Students' Society (UDSS) and the Health Science Society (HSS), the first year students were introduced to their various student societies, and the services and events they provide. I'm certain all students left with the realisation that going to uni is not just about getting a degree. It was a great event and I welcome the first years into their new courses. They've chosen a very rewarding professions and I wish them all the best of luck in the years ahead. Next came the first council meeting of the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA), held in Melbourne. WAMSS was represented by myself and David Chenik

(WAMSS AMSA representative). Council was an intense two days of student led debate and discussion which achieved some very clear outcomes on AMSA's direction this year. It was also an excellent opportunity to meet other medical student societies from all over Australia, not only to sit back and revise what we do, but also to help out the smaller societies that have arisen due to the large number of new medical schools approved by the AMC. Next council will be held in Perth in July and it will be good to see how far we have progressed in attaining our goals. Over the next few weeks we will also be having our Fresher Welcome, Interyear Dragonboats, Fresher Rivercruise and our famous Scrubber Day for charity. No rest for the weary!



A few dollars short



By Jan Rusman
President of the Medical Students' Association of Notre Dame

Somewhere in between applying for medical school and receiving the offer of a place, you find yourself asking - how am I going to pay for this degree? Now the simple, flippant answer is: "Well, if you want it bad enough, you will find a way." Fair enough, but mantras "don't buy no bread". What happens in real life? In my case I applied for the lowest fee-charging universities, I applied for scholarships, I sold my car and I saved money like I have never done before. And I got lucky; well, sort off. My grades were sufficient for a rural bonded HECS position - which meant I did not have to suffer with an upfront full-fee, pay-as-you-go place in medical school. My story (so far) has a happy ending. But others aren't quite so lucky. And I think their's is perhaps the more interesting story. Had I been offered a full-fee paying place

at the University of Sydney, I would have had to pay \$35,520 up-front each year for four years, totalling \$142,080 over the duration of the course. What then? Well there is indeed a recently invigorated government loan scheme known as Fee-Help that provides an \$80,000 loan which may be used by a student in order to pay for up-front education. It is repaid once the graduate is working. Yet, as pleased as we all are with the recent increase in the loan from \$50,000 to \$80,000, this scheme remains insufficient to cover the full cost of any medical degree in Australia. Indeed, for 25 per cent of my colleagues studying medicine at Notre Dame, when the Fee-Help maxim of \$80,000 is reached, they will have to find \$20,000 from alternative sources in order to complete their education. This is the best-case scenario. But for my colleagues studying post-graduate medicine in a full-fee place at any other university in

Australia - for example those paying \$142,080 at Sydney University - the shortfall is much greater; they need to find \$62,080. I don't envy them. One solution is to find an agreement with a bank. In fact, negotiations are currently underway to find Notre Dame's students a reasonable loan scheme with the commercial banks that would approximate the terms of a typical mortgage scheme. But wouldn't it be great if the Federal Government would rethink its Fee-Help loan scheme to accommodate the typical cost of medicine? My full-fee paying colleagues in all the universities across Australia would be able to sleep a little better at night while studying for their degrees and Australia's future doctors would be from a pool defined less by socio-economic status, and more by their entrance grades. Wouldn't that be wonderful? It's just a thought.