

THE MEDICOS FROM RANDWICK RACECOURSE

On a recent Sunday morning in Sydney . . . *"There was movement at the racecourse for the word had passed around / That the colt from medical indemnity had got away / And had joined the government horses - he was worth a thousand pound / So all the doctors had gathered to the fray. / All the tried and noted medicos from the nation near and far / Had mustered at the racecourse overnight".**

In an extraordinary display of purpose, nearly 4000 doctors assembled at Randwick Racecourse to voice their discontent with yet another impost — the new IBNR levy. The gathering listened patiently as their leaders railed against this new tax, but the meeting's mood was crystal clear: enough is enough, it's time for action!

And unprecedented action followed, as surgeons withdrew their services from the public health system, prompting the yet-to-be-anointed federal health minister to propose a levy moratorium. Politicians accused the surgeons of exaggerating the indemnity burden, while doctors dismissed the moratorium as a political expedient to bridge the looming federal election.

But this very public stoush has deeper roots — doctors' growing impatience with years of political inertia and buck-passing, the absence of a blueprint for healthcare reform, a system stultified by increasingly bureaucratic red tape, and a service struggling with a waning workforce. In short, doctors have had enough of politicians playing with their professional lives.

*"And down by Kosciuszko . . . / Where the air is clear as crystal and the white stars fairly blaze . . . / The man from Snowy River is a household word today".**

The medicos from Randwick Racecourse may too become the stuff of legend in Australian medical folklore.

Martin B Van Der Weyden

* With apologies to AB "Banjo" Paterson's *The Man from Snowy River* (1895).