

Why did you choose to be a Doctor?

When I first left school I started an Engineering degree which I hated and quit – I realised I wanted to do something with people. After some time travelling, working in a restaurant, some time studying teacher, I was accepted into the Bachelor of Medicine.

What has been on of the highlights of your career so far?

So far the highlights of my career have been representing students and doctors – my year as President of the Australian Medical Students' Association especially. I worked with a great team of students and we got some really good outcomes for our peers, especially around bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment and rural training places.



this issue

Dr James Lawler

Building a healthy workforce.

How do you believe NSW Health can do things better for JMOs?

I spent an elective during my medical training in the Medical Workforce Department of NSW Health – the people there work hard and are passionate about building a better health system for patients and the staff working in it. I think more dialogue regarding what the experience of doctors on the ground is with those who make workplace policies would unveil a number of common goals to work on – overall, a healthy workforce which is focusing on patients over administration is better for patient care.

Why is being part of a Union important to you?

I think that when it comes to membership-based organisations, members get benefits from what they give rather than what they receive. Going to meetings, hearing the views of my colleagues and working on plans to deliver better outcomes for ourselves and our patients gives me a sense of value in my membership. It adds an extra aspect to seeing patients individually – helping me develop the tools to combat the systemic factors which cause them ill health.

How would you like to see ASMOF change in the future to better cater to JMO's needs?

The number one issue for Doctors-in-Training is the amount of unrostered overtime they work and don't get paid for. Hospital administrators are perversely incentivised to foster a system where the day team stays after 5pm as they won't claim the unrostered overtime – so unfortunately the cheapest time for doctors to be working is also the one where they are the most fatigued. It is in everyone's best interests if the issue is addressed urgently, and we need to campaign against the obstacles which force DiTs not to claim.

What do you do when you aren't working?

I have a beautiful five-month old daughter and a wonderful partner and I try and spend time with my family! I take bub for a walk in the park to give my partner some time to herself, or we go out together on a bushwalk or a trip to the shops.