



Communiqué

Medical Board of Australia meeting: 18 April 2013

The Medical Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Specialist pathway - short term training

The 'specialist pathway - short term training' allows internationally qualified specialists or international specialists-in-training (i.e. specialist trainees who have nearly completed specialist training in another country) to undertake short term training in Australia without being required to complete the Australian Medical Council (AMC) examination or to have a full comparability assessment by the relevant specialist college.

Medical practitioners in the 'specialist pathway – short term training' can apply for limited registration for postgraduate training or supervised practice. This pathway does not lead to general or specialist registration and international medical graduates (IMGs) in this pathway are required to return to their country of origin on completion of the short term training (up to two years).

The Board has drafted guidelines on the 'specialist pathway - short term training'. The guidelines aim to clarify the requirements for eligibility for this pathway and the requirements for registration for medical practitioners in this pathway. The draft guidelines also clarify the role of the specialist medical colleges which provide advice to the Board about the suitability of the training position for the individual applicant.

The Board will shortly be undertaking a preliminary consultation on these draft guidelines and will consult more widely later in 2013.

The intern project

As requested by the Board, the AMC is developing a national standards framework for intern training.

In late 2012, the AMC invited feedback on a set of draft documents relating to internship in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). The AMC has reviewed the feedback and has released a *Communiqué on the proposed National Intern Training Standards and Framework* which is available on the [AMC website](#).

The AMC plans to trial the national assessment process and assessment forms in one or two states or territories, before implementation. The AMC also plans to pilot the proposed process for assessing postgraduate medical councils' performance as intern training accreditation bodies against the draft quality framework for accreditation.

As documents are revised and the pilots are planned in more detail, the AMC will provide further information to stakeholders.

Medical Board national meeting

The Board held its third national meeting in Melbourne on 18 – 20 April 2013. Attendees included national and state and territory Board members and senior Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) staff who are involved in medical regulation.

This annual meeting focuses on the Board's core regulatory functions and its responsibilities in relation to registration and notifications. It also provides an opportunity for state and territory board members to contribute to national policy development.

The meeting also considered the broader quality and safety agenda with a key-note presentation from Professor Chris Baggoley, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Ageing. Other guest speakers included Dr Steve Hambleton, President, Australian Medical Association, Professor Kate Leslie, President, Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges, Professor Robin Mortimer President, Australian Medical Council and Mr Ben Wallace, Executive Director – Clinical Training Reform, Health Workforce Australia.

Queensland

The Honourable Minister Lawrence Springborg, Queensland Minister for Health, recently announced that he will introduce new legislation to create a Health Ombudsman for Queensland as a key part of a new complaints reporting system. His decision was in response to an investigation into the conduct, regulation, registration and discipline of medical practitioners in Queensland which was prompted by a public interest disclosure to the Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Commission in 2012.

Mr Richard Chesterman AO RFD QC was appointed by the Crime and Misconduct Commission to undertake an independent assessment of the allegations. In response to Mr Chesterman's recommendations, two further reviews were undertaken to examine files from the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia. The reviews included periods both before and after transition to the National Scheme. Mr Jeffrey Hunter SC identified cases involving six medical practitioners for which he recommended referral to Queensland police for further investigation. In the second review, finalised on 15 April 2013, a panel comprising Dr Kim Forrester, Adjunct Professor James Houston and Professor Elizabeth Davies identified a set of serious concerns about delays in investigation and inconsistencies in decision-making.

On 16 April 2013, Minister Springborg issued the 10 Queensland board members with a notice to show cause why they should not be removed from office.

Subsequent to the MBA meeting on 18 April 2013, the majority of members of the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia tendered their resignation. The remaining members await the Minister's further action. The QBMBA members issued a [statement](#) and said they believed they had carried out their responsibilities as Board members with due care and responsibility.

AHPRA and the Medical Board of Australia have stated that they will work with Minister Springborg to improve health complaints management in Queensland. The Medical Board of Australia believes that at all times the Queensland Board has acted in good faith and had the safety of the public of Queensland as its first priority.

Thank you to Dr Mary Cohn

At the meeting, Dr Mary Cohn announced her resignation from the Medical Board of Australia. Dr Cohn is an experienced and widely respected general practitioner. She was first appointed to the Medical Board of Queensland in April 1998 and was Chair from 2004 to 2010. Dr Cohn was the Queensland practitioner member appointed to the inaugural Medical Board of Australia in 2009 and was reappointed last year for a second term. She chaired the Queensland Board of the MBA for its first year and retired from the Queensland Board in June 2011. Dr Cohn is a passionate advocate for high standards of medical practice. She has shown unwavering dedication and generosity in her commitment to the Queensland community for fifteen years, always focussing on protection of the public.

Dr Joanna Flynn AM
Chair, Medical Board of Australia

29 April 2013