

The Members
Medical Board of Australia

3 Aug 2018

Dear Members,

**Re: Draft revised
“Good medical practice: A code of conduct for doctors in Australia”**

I am a medical practitioner and I wish to express concerns with the following text in Section 2.1 of the draft.

“The boundary between a doctor’s personal and public profile can be blurred. As a doctor, you need to acknowledge and consider the effect of your comments and actions outside work, including online, on your professional standing and on the reputation of the profession. If making public comment, you should acknowledge the profession’s generally accepted views and indicate when your personal opinion differs. Behaviour which could undermine community trust in the profession is at odds with good medical practice and may be considered unprofessional.”

I believe this text should be removed from the draft code.

The Medical Board has set itself up as a type of censorship board with regard to the personal lives and personal views of medical practitioners. Doctors are entitled to hold and express their own views. To force them to express only the views sanctioned by those in power and authority disrespects the community at large and deprives the community of access to the true beliefs and value systems of their doctors. It is regressive to disallow medical practitioner’s convictions to be expressed honestly to the community. In so doing, it causes practitioners to withhold doing their best for the sake of the patient. The phrase “outside work, including online” is also unnecessarily intrusive.

The best behaviour which would foster community trust in the profession would be one where the convictions of treating clinicians are freely available to be known by the patient, whose best interest is being served.

What the Medical Board has proposed in the draft code of conduct may be detrimental to the community because medical practitioners are apparently to be bound by duty to tout a particular view which, in many cases, may be controversial or even debatable. Medical practitioners need room to disagree with the majority opinion of the profession without fear of censure, especially when those views are dogma rather than based on evidence.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Poh Lin Cheah