

From: Rachel Sinclair
To: [medboardconsultation](#)
Subject: Public Consultation on Good Medical Practice
Date: Monday, 30 July 2018 9:03:11 PM

To the Medical Board,

I am writing to express my concern at the proposed Code of Conduct which will apply to all Australian doctors which requires doctors to be “culturally safe” and comply with patient’s beliefs about gender identity and sexuality, with absolutely no provision given for doctors to differ in their professional judgement.

A doctors group has expressed their concern for the future of medicine in Australia in light of the proposed changes. This code of conduct could force doctors to accept ‘cultural beliefs and practises’ that are opposed to good medical practise.

Among their concerns are that ‘culturally safe’ does not necessarily mean ‘medically safe’. Other areas of concern that could be contentious relate to Body Dysmorphic Disorder, dealing with patients affected by Islamic cultural issues such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, and with issues stemming from indigenous cultural practices, such as sub-incision and pay-back.

At present it is also unclear whether doctors will be compelled to act contrary to their own conscience regarding patient requests for referrals. Labor MPs in Queensland including Deputy Premier Jackie Trad have demanded that Queensland doctors be compelled to refer women for an abortion, and thus violate the conscientious beliefs of many doctors.

The group of doctors believes that the wording in the 2009 version of the Code is ethically sound and should not be changed.

It is clear that the new guidelines will have a very significant effect on the freedom of doctors to publicly debate the merits of medical treatments. This is of great concern. Already the Medical Board is bringing an Australian GP before the Medical Board for retweeting on Twitter. If the Code of Conduct is changed, this would stifle free speech and debate. The threat of deregistration would silence dissenting doctors who speak out — or even retweet — on debatable topics.

These concerns need to be considered wisely considering the proposed Code of Conduct.

Yours faithfully,
Rachel Sinclair