

From: Hamilton Smith
To: [medboardconsultation](#)
Subject: Submission re public consultation draft revision 2018
Date: Monday, 30 July 2018 10:57:15 AM

To whom it may concern,

As a Australian citizen who upholds the value and importance of free speech in this nation I am concerned about the changes suggested by AHPRA in section 2.1 on professionalism of doctors; namely:

Community trust in the medical profession is essential. Every doctor has a responsibility to behave ethically to justify this trust. 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 would question how AHPRA can know what comprises 'generally accepted views' on any particular subject? In recent times vocal minorities can often be seen to be more representative than they truly are. For example, the official Nursing organisation recently declared itself in favour of euthanasia but a survey of nurses involved in providing palliative care found their majority was not in favour of euthanasia.

Secondly, how can AHPRA judge the nebulous concept of 'community trust'? Can AHPRA guarantee that a small committee of its judges will not be influenced subjectively by pressure groups.

As I state above may main concern with the suggested changes relates to the high potential for the loss of free speech by doctors. The medical profession needs to be able to discuss all ideas openly and without fear of restriction or sensure. Such debates over ideas is the basis of the scientific method. A gagged profession is likely to reduce rather than strengthen community trust. The community is best served by a free thinking profession rather than an intimidated cartel that speaks with one voice. The Australian community is well educated and informed and is more than able to evaluate concepts and values by itself and does not need thought protection by AHPRA.

By submitting to the sanctions of alleged professionalism, the new code may force a doctor, in fact, to practice unethically, i.e. to practice against his/her conscience. Doctors, therefore, need to maintain personal honesty and integrity. They should be able to have a voice to both sides of any question and so maintain public trust in the profession.

I submit the above for your consideration. Should you need to contact me please refer to the details below.

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