

The proposed revisions mostly seem to be sensible. However, I have a concern about where Section 2.1 discusses behaviour and comments outside of work. With the current wording, "Behaviour which could undermine community trust in the profession" may possibly include the expression of political and religious convictions outside of work. While this is not a likely scenario, severe damage would be done to the standing of the code should it be used in an attempt to stifle legitimate speech as such use would almost certainly cause sections of the Australian community to see the code as severely oppressive. Additionally, any potential abuse of Section 2.1 would likely occur at the expense of doctors who are part of political and religious minorities. This violates the spirit of the code, which seeks to protect the rights of minorities. Hence, a safeguard should be added, for example: "Medicine as a profession is apolitical and irreligious, therefore the lawful expression of political and religious convictions by doctors in contexts not connected to their practice of medicine can never be considered to violate good medical practice." Since the safeguard merely seeks to clarify the meaning of the current draft, it carries no risk itself but reduces the potential risk to the reputation of the code and to minorities. Therefore, I see no convincing argument why a clarifying statement should not be included. Because of this, I urge that the new Section 2.1 be rejected unless the aforementioned safeguard is added. I do not have any other concerns to express about the proposed revisions.