

August 1<sup>st</sup> 2018

Re: Public consultation paper

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

Thank you for inviting comments on the draft revised code of conduct by the Medical Board of Australia. I write in regard to the proposed change in the Medical Board Code of Practice, with special reference to the proposed new text – Section 2.1 (see below);

PROPOSED NEW TEXT – SECTION 2.1

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 write not as a medical professional but as a member of society who gets sick and relies on a good, faithful General Practitioner (GP) to treat me when necessary. I am very concerned that the proposed changes will severely limit the nature of free speech, freedom of religion and even freedom of thought, not to mention, the freedom for medical research to discover and develop new practices and medicines, which might at first appear to "go against the Establishment".

For example, will my GP be brought before any medical tribunal if she happens to be a climate-change dissenter, or a Holocaust-denier, or firmly believes in aliens on Mars, or that Robert Mugabe was a very fine Prime Minister? Do her personal beliefs make her an unfit GP to practice? Does she not have the freedom to think in "crazy" ways, if I am allowed to call them "crazy" at all? What about if my GP posts an "offensive" Facebook comment advocating that rugby is the game that is played in heaven and that all other ball-sports are played by inferior people? Or perhaps if she poses with rugby international Israel Folau and says how much she admires him and his views? Should I complain that her ability to diagnose my illness is limited because of her personal opinion? Is my GP allowed to have a copy of the Holy Quran on her shelf as she treats me, a devoted Christian? Should I question her ability to prescribed medicine because I don't believe in the five pillars of Islam? What about if my Christian medical specialist has a strongly held Judeo-Christian ethic regarding the sanctity of human life? Are they no longer allowed to think and act according to their own conscience regarding what their holy book teaches?

On and on these examples and real-life scenarios could go. On and on the complications that will arise should these changes in the Medical Board Code of Practice be accepted. Please consider the issues at stake regarding the personal freedoms (of thought, expression, religion and the like) that medical practitioners have and the fear that is imposed by these proposed changes that they may face disciplinary action for "unprofessional conduct". I sincerely hope that common sense prevails and these

changes do not see the light of day. Heaven help us if your Board and any others like it, determine how we must all think and act outside of the professional parameters of a person's workplace.

Kind regards,

*Dom Fiocco*