

Medical Board of Australia consultation on the funding of external doctors' health programs

Submission received from: **Dr Nolan McDonnell**

Question 1: Is there a need for health programs?

Do you see any value in, or need for external health programs for medical students and/or doctors? Please explain your reasoning

Yes-I definitely see value in an external program. Doctors are notoriously poor at caring for themselves and are at higher risk of mental health related issues (including suicide) which may impair their ability to care for their patients. Education and training is needed in this regard, commencing at medical school. I support external programs as many doctors and students are concerned at the implications of internal services and may be reluctant to seek help.

Question 2: Preferred model for external health programs

Of the existing models in Australia as described above, is there a model that you would prefer to see adopted nationally? Is there an alternative model that you would like to see adopted nationally?

I personally feel that the more comprehensive services of the VDHP and Doctors Health SA should be the models that are followed. DHSA is a relatively untested model from what I can see but does appear to have had significant thought put into it.

Question 3: The role of the Board in funding external health programs

Do you believe that it is the role of the Board to fund external health programs?

For me the question is if the Board does not fund external programs, who will? I struggle to see any other agency who will have such broad coverage of doctors in Australia. I think the Specialist Colleges should have some role in the funding and services provided.

Question 4: Range of services provided by doctors' health programs

What services should be provided by doctors' health programs. In addition to the ones you have selected, what other services (if any) should be provided by doctors' health programs?

Telephone advice during office hours

Telephone advice available 24/7

Referral to expert practitioners for assessment and management

Education services for medical practitioners and medical students to raise awareness of health issues for the medical profession and to encourage practitioners and students to have a general practitioner

Programs to enhance the skills of medical practitioners who assess and manage the health of doctors

Research on doctors' health issues

Publication of resources – maintaining a website, newsletters, journal articles

Other services (please list)

There should be a strong emphasis on the education and prevention of problems.

Question 5: Funding

How much of an increase in registration fees is acceptable to you, to fund doctors' health services?

\$25 - \$40

Question 6: Other comments

Do you have any other comments or feedback about external health programs?

A National program would be ideal but with the layers of bureaucracy in each state/territory it will be a very big job to develop one Nationally agreed program.