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To: [medboardconsultation](#)
Subject: Consultation on Good Medical Practice [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 15 August 2018 3:25:55 PM

Dear AHPRA

I am concerned about the paragraph on page 11 of the document, entitled "Professionalism" which deals with the requirement to insert a disclaimer in any public statement to the effect that the view expressed is different from the profession's "generally accepted views".

There are two problems with this;

1. A medical practitioner's comments about matters outside of their work environment have nothing to do with the medical profession *unless* in making those comments they identify themselves as being part of the medical profession AND as representing the medical profession's views. Their comments within the work environment should be governed by local employer policy and standard courtesy. So, telling an individual patient during a clinical consultation that they are "fat and lazy" would be unprofessional in my book because it is discourteous and will not act as a disincentive to the patient losing weight. Making a public statement that the medical profession considers that "all fat people are lazy" would also be unprofessional, because is factually incorrect and a misrepresents the view of many doctors. However, making a general comment that "some people who suffer from obesity are obese because they do hardly any exercise" may or may not be correct and, regardless, is not unprofessional, even though some people may find it offensive.
2. How on earth is a medical practitioner to know what the generally accepted views of the profession are on political or moral topics of the day? If you want to go this route of requiring a disclaimer then there needs to be a list what the official position of the medical profession is on every topic where contrary comment could result in a charge of unprofessional behaviour.

In my view the most sensible course is to require the disclaimer only where the medical practitioner recommends action that is contrary to the law – in which case the disclaimer would be along the lines that the recommended action is illegal. Following a successful prosecution, in a proper court of law, the practitioner could then be struck off for being unprofessional. Simply expressing a view on, say, what the most appropriate age of consent for sexual intercourse ought to be, is NOT unprofessional, even if I say it should be 30 years old, when most of my colleagues perhaps think it should be 12 and the law says 16. What is the official position of the medical profession on that question by the way? And, if AHPRA can't immediately come up with an answer, consider how unreasonable it would be to expect a medical professional to know the position on many other topics.

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