

Media statement

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Medical Board and AHPRA endorse EAG call for action

The Medical Board of Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency today endorsed the call for action across the health sector to end discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.

The Chair of the Medical Board of Australia responded to the publication of the draft report from the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) established by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, which found unacceptably high levels of discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the surgical practice and surgical education.

‘Trust and integrity are the cornerstones of good medical practice and professional behavior,’ said Dr Joanna Flynn AM, Chair of the Medical Board of Australia and member of the EAG.

‘Discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment are entirely out of step with this and should not be tolerated anywhere in medicine,’ Dr Flynn said.

The Board and AHPRA will review the EAG report more closely and recognise there are implications beyond surgery that apply across the health sector.

Dr Flynn identified three core areas where the Board and AHPRA would consider what more they could do to help end discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment:

- Accreditation of specialist training: In partnership with the Australian Medical Council, review the standards for specialist education and training to ensure they are explicit and clear about what processes are required to support trainee wellbeing.
- Specialist IMG assessment: Work with specialist medical colleges to ensure there is enough transparency and accountability in their assessment of international medical graduates and that these processes are free from discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment.
- Complaints management: While the best place to manage most complaints about discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment is in the workplace in partnership with other relevant agencies, some of the most serious cases may breach the Board’s professional standards and require regulatory action to manage risk to patients.

‘It is time to respond to inappropriate behaviour as it occurs and to show that it will no longer be tolerated,’ Dr Flynn said.

‘We cannot expect people to trust and respect the medical profession if we do not display trustworthiness and accountability,’ she said.

AHPRA CEO, Martin Fletcher, said AHPRA would review the implications of the EAG report and work with all the National Boards in the National Scheme to see what action by regulators would help end discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the health sector.

‘AHPRA has done a lot of work to improve our management of complaints, to try to make the experience of our regulatory processes better for both notifiers and practitioners,’ said AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher.

'This is an ongoing priority and we will look at what other contribution regulation and accreditation can make to addressing these serious and entrenched problems,' Mr Fletcher said.

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