

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

Submission received from: **Name withheld**

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

There is both value and need for a national approach to care of sick and impaired doctors. This would be in line with developments in other advanced economies such as US and Canada. The current approach means depending on the State of practice, services and facilities can be markedly different. This is unfair and unlikely to achieve best outcomes. Properly funded program could provide both active treatment and enable rehabilitation of impaired doctors. It is a matter of justice that such facilities be available, particularly as mandatory reporting is required in most States of Australia. Such a service could also be designed to assist the clinician with reentry into clinical practice. This is currently lacking. Overall recovery rates for impaired healthcare professionals seem to be higher compared with other groups with appropriate and intensive management, as well as subsequent follow-up care. Teaching and research functions are other benefits from a fully funded National model, as well as the possibility for preventative health programs to be established.

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?

VDHP style model with clinician and case manager support. I have been the beneficiary of such a model with an excellent outcome achieved.

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?

Yes. It is just with a requirement for mandatory reporting that the Board support funding for external programs

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 available 24/7

Referral to expert practitioners for assessment and management

Develop and maintain a list of practitioners who are willing to treat colleagues

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

Case management and monitoring (including workplace monitoring) the progress of those who voluntarily enter into Case Management agreements (or similar) with the service

Follow up of all participants contacting or attending the service

Assistance in finding support for re-entry to work and rehabilitation

Research on doctors' health issues

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

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?