

telephonist and after-hours locum service. Four panel general practitioners and 1 psychiatrist provide their time gratis.

VDHP – Annual cost is \$500,000 funded from the reserves of the previous MPBV.

Other services available for medical practitioners

In addition to the doctors' advisory services, there are other services available for medical practitioners. These include:

- Medical Benevolent Association of NSW
- Medical Benevolent Association of South Australia
- Rural Doctors Workforce Agency – Dr Doc Program (supports the health and well being of South Australia's Rural GPs)
- Peer Support Service – AMA Vic
- Victorian Medical Benevolent Association

Feedback about the type of programs the Board should fund

The Board recognises the significant contribution being made by people and agencies working in the area of doctors' health, many of whom are volunteers. Early recognition of illness and intervention to restore a practitioner to better health and to avoid them becoming impaired are important for the individual practitioner, the medical profession and the community.

There is a range of health services currently provided across Australia. The Board does not have a clear view about which is the best model for the provision of these services or how they are best funded. The Board is seeking the views of the medical profession on these issues.

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.

Medicine is inherently a stressful occupation. The learning period is long, the remuneration is moderate only, the working hours are onerous, the threat of temporary or permanent de-registration is present. In the case of an ensuitable student or practitioner, it is too late for an easy change, both personally and financially. Possible lack of confidentiality may be a disincentive in asking for help at any early stage. There is a need!

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?

The VDHP model is perhaps too extensive. Its modification to the NSW model which refers back to a normal doctor/patient relationship may be better, with less bureaucracy. ~~or better~~ Encouragement for early assistance is very very important.

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, but only to encourage early confidential advice and appropriate referral within normal medical practice.

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

What services should be provided by doctors' health programs – click on as many options as you want. 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
- 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 *AND ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE*
- Programs to enhance the skills of medical practitioners who assess and manage the health of doctors
- NO* - Case management and monitoring (including workplace monitoring) the progress of those who voluntarily enter into Case Management agreements (or similar) with the service
- NO* - Follow up of all participants contacting or attending the service
- NO* - 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

Other services (please list)

Question 5: Funding

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

- Nil
- \$1 - \$5
- \$5 - \$10
- \$10 - \$25
- \$25 - \$40
- >\$40

Question 6: Other comments

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

It is vital that doctors who lose their ability to earn during mental, physical, or other episodes can also be supported at an early stage by an initial financial advising expert. This service could be supplied by the A.M.A.