

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

Submission received from: **Sam Giokas**

## 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

*Most definitely yes. Doctors and medical students may develop a range of health problems like the general public does. They require a confidential service that is sensitive to the special needs of sick doctors, that acknowledges the implications illness has on their career and public safety, and that provides advocacy and peer support. This cannot be adequately addressed by the usual GP/specialist referral system, and medical boards and AHPRA have stated that they have no role in managing doctors health problems other than protecting the public.*

## 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 is an excellent model and should be adopted nationally.*

## 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?

*I understand it is not the Board's stated role, but I believe it should be, as helping to keep doctors healthy will help to protect the public.*

## 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*

*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*

*Other services (please list)*

*Facilitated peer support group*

**Question 5: Funding**

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

>\$40

**Question 6: Other comments**

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

*I believe a well-funded external health program is essential to encourage early intervention for sick doctors, thereby helping to ensure public safety.*