

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

Submission received from: **Dr Mike Moynihan, President – Rural Doctors Association of Victoria**

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

I have had some contact with the Victorian program, taking advice on the handling of certain cases, and have attended 4-5 information sessions, some of which I organised myself. I think it is an excellent and essential program.

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?

I think the program in Victoria was ideally formulated. It has to be realised that there is an element of compulsion which is sometimes desirable in alcohol and mood and personality disorder problems

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?

Without a national program we are unlikely to see an effective doctors health problem. I believe that it is the Boards function to take steps to ensure that Doctors function properly in their practice and this goes beyond ensuring proper standards of registration and ensuring proper supervision prior to attaining registration standards. There are significant numbers of doctors with psychiatric, addiction and personality problems and proper management means that many of them can stay safely in practice and the integrity of the profession simultaneously protected. I therefore think the Board should take carriage of the program and feel I would be supported in this by my State Association, which has hosted the program at its conferences a number of times.

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

Other services (please list)

I think that the scope of the program depends on resources and human resources are less plentiful than they used to be. The program should at least be available on weekdays. I am not convince that it would be cost

effective to make it 24/7 unless a roster of experienced doctor to doctor clinicians is available. I do think it needs special aptitude and confidence to do this job and special training is especially desirable. If the service gets well established then possibly it might rise to a newsletter and research, though this might desirably be published in AHPRA newsletters. Perhaps a university affiliation might be desirable.

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 honestly feel that this is as necessary as insurance. I have come across a significant number of impaired doctors in my time. While I have often been able to solve the problem, sometimes in discussion, I find other doctors sometimes quite loathe to take action themselves. And the longer you take over it the worse things become. Education is therefore necessary and awareness that it does help everybody to take action.

Dr Mike Moynihan

President

Rural Doctors Association of Victoria