



## Albury Wodonga Regional GP Network

14 April 2011

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Albury Wodonga Regional GP Network (AWRGPN) appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the Senate Inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

### **Background**

The AWRGPN supports General Practices in the Victorian city of Wodonga and the New South Wales towns of Albury, Corowa, Howlong, Jindera, Urana, Culcairn & Holbrook. There are 25 practices in the region covered by AWRGPN.

The AWRGPN workforce program has been operational since 1999 and is supported by a dedicated staff member since the program's inception.

The workforce program offers extensive recruitment and retention support to newly arrived and existing GPs and their families. The support provided includes assistance with; immigration, medical board registration, access to a Medicare provider number, professional development and family relocation / community settling.

The particular issue of 'National' medical registration is of paramount importance to our organisation as the AWRGPN straddles the NSW / Victorian State Borders. Cross border anomalies are frequent in the day to day support provided to our medical practitioners and their staff.

The following information relates to the Senate Terms Of Reference as follows and is in relation to the **medical board** department of AHPRA. It has been written from the AWRGPN Workforce Program Manager's experiences since 1 July 2010;

- (a) Capacity and ability of AHPRA to implement and administer the national registration of health practitioners
- (b) Performance of AHPRA in administering the registration of health practitioners
- (c) Impact of AHPRA processes and administration on health practitioners, patients, hospitals, and service providers
- (g) response times to individual registration enquiries.
- Dr A – UK graduate experienced 6 month delay with registration (initial application provided to AHPRA pre July 2010). During this time AHPRA did not respond to emails or telephone calls in relation to this matter. Dr A was extremely anxious

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during this time and the AWRGPN and Practice employing Dr A remained in constant contact with the Dr to appease and ensure interest in relocating to Australia. The Practice was forced to close books at the Practice due to the delay in the registration application process and the pressure on existing GPs.

- Dr B – Limited Registration doctor requiring advice on medical registration pathway. Dr B has had no contact from AHPRA in relation to query submitted to AHPRA Oct 2010. Further written requests and telephone calls have proven futile.
- Practice A – Request made by Vocationally Registered, RACGP Supervisor doctor to AHPRA August 2010 to change limited registration doctor's supervision level. Initial written request to AHPRA in June was 'lost' due to relocation of offices. The supervising doctor in Practice will not accept a limited registration doctor in the future because of the lack of communication from AHPRA throughout the entire process.
- Dr C – Vocationally Registered doctor providing 35 years medical service in solo rural GP practice was very anxious that registration renewal was paid, however, was stated as 'expired' on the AHPRA website for months after payment had been made. This doctor was taking leave and was very concerned regarding registration status upon return from leave.
- Dr D – Retired Australian Graduate GP seeking to return to the workforce was subject to the AHPRA 'Recency of Practice' requirements. Dr D was provided with no guidance, form or template in regards to a return to work program. Dr D wrote her own return to work program in November 2010.
- Pre-employment structured clinical interviews (PESCI's) for limited registration doctors are non transferrable between States contradicting a 'National' Registration system. This is of particular concern and has affected GPs in the AWRGPN region as we are a State border regional centre.

In summary;

1. A non responsive 1300 number and the email query option is a totally unacceptable method for a service organisation to offer GP customers. The 1300 call centre personnel are unable to answer queries despite asking the detail of your enquiry. Not once was a telephone call from this office transferred to a knowledgeable staff member.
2. The website email enquiry option provided the same result as the 1300 number. Not once has a website email enquiry from this office been responded to since 1 July 2010.
3. Many doctors, particularly International Medical Graduates rely on the knowledge and advice of local persons to assist with navigating the system to successful placement. The AWRGPN supports medical practices and on occasions, acts on behalf of the doctors with their applications for registration and follow up of matters

related. This needs to be recognised as part of the vital communication link between the doctor, AHPRA and the AWRGPN.

4. PESCI's must be transferrable between States as part of the National Registration system.