



Dear Mr Lindsay

Thank you for your letter asking for my thoughts on the state of the health service in Townsville. I am a doctor, a psychiatrist and a lecturer at JCU medical school. I trained in the UK and I have been living and working in Townsville for two years now. I have a "limited registration" with the Medical Board of Queensland, until I take the Australian Royal College of Psychiatrists examinations.

I would like to make the following brief points. If you would like me to expand on them, please feel free to get back in touch with me.

1. JCU Medical School is pitifully under-resourced and cannot provide the regional medical expertise and leadership that is required.
2. As a QH employee I cannot comment to a politician on the quality of the mental health service provided by QH, as this would be a breach of QH employee regulations.
3. However, I will say this: the solution lies not only in money and resources, but also recruiting and retaining skilled staff in North Queensland. The money is already here, but not the people.
4. From my own perspective, the paranoia about "foreign-trained doctors" is extremely unhelpful, demoralising and insulting to the many foreign-trained doctors (such as myself) who contribute to service delivery in this part of Australia.
5. One should ask this question: were Drs Berg and Patel problematic because they were foreign-trained (which begs the question of how the rest of the world manages without Australian-trained doctors); or were they problematic because they were criminally irresponsible individuals?
6. The system for evaluating and accrediting foreign-trained doctors is arcane and extremely clumsy, involving (as it does) at least five different organisations (the AMC, the HIC, the Medical Board of Queensland, the relevant Royal College, and the doctor's employer) who have to repeatedly cross-check with each other and make duplicate requests for references and supporting documentation. This puts off many able clinicians who would rather come for a limited period and then return home abroad, or choose not to come to Australia at all. It is also hugely time consuming for those (such as myself) who have chosen to settle in Australia.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Dr David Hartman