



20 December 2023

Dr Maria Boulton
President
AMA Queensland

Dr Brett Dale
Chief Executive Officer
AMA Queensland

Email to: [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Boulton and Dr Dale

AMA Qld Council recommendations for improved regulatory processes

Thank you for your letter dated 5 December 2023 regarding the distress experienced by your members during a notification process and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland Council recommendations for improved support for practitioners subject to regulatory processes.

I understand Dr Boulton was at a meeting between the Australian Medical Association, Medical Board of Australia (MBA) and Australian Health Practitioner Agency (Ahpra) on the 5 December and raised both of these issues.

As you are aware, in 2021 Ahpra and the National Boards commissioned an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) to identify and minimise the distress of health practitioners while they are involved in a regulatory process. This work explored the reasons behind practitioner distress and included cases where suicide or self-harm had been reported.

The EAG's 15 recommendations with 33 specific actions were accepted and are being implemented progressively over 2023–25. By the end of October 2023, 22 of the 33 actions had been started. All actions will be started by June 2024. No actions have yet been completed or fully adopted, although progress has been made with many. We are aiming to implement all actions by June 2025, while acknowledging that much of this work will be ongoing. This work has the very real and full support of Ahpra and the National Boards.

Some recommendations require the contribution of external partners and other parties. Three symposia are being planned for February 2024. We have invited support services, mental health organisations, professional associations, peak bodies for education providers, indemnity providers, legal defence firms, the Ombudsman and co-regulators, as well as Ahpra and National Boards representatives to collaborate on actions that would benefit from their support and participation. The focus of this first set of symposia will be on two actions: How do we address misinformation about the regulatory process that contributes to practitioner stress? And how can we encourage practitioners to seek support? Medical stakeholders have been invited to the symposium on 12 February 2024. The AMA has, of course, been invited and we look forward to working with you to progress the issues of mutual concern.

We will also seek to partner with external stakeholders to advance other action in 2024.

I wish to offer some specific information in response to some points you have raised.

You recommended the possible use of mentors/practitioners with lived experience of regulatory processes to support practitioners. EAG recommendation 13 is 'Encourage and help co-design a peer support program, run by partners, linking practitioners who are involved in a notification or monitoring and

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
National Boards

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Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

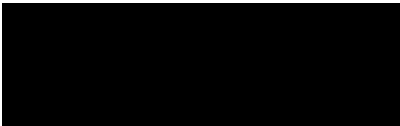
compliance with practitioners who have been through similar processes'. This action is scheduled to start in April 2024, after we have received a report following exploration of recommendation 10 which will have considered the value and feasibility of a navigation and support service aimed at guiding an identified subset of practitioners through our regulatory processes. We would welcome working with you to explore the value of a peer support program.

The EAG continues to meet to provide advice to Ahpra and the National Boards on the implementation of its recommendations. We invited a sub-set of practitioners with recent lived experience of our notifications and monitoring processes to nominate to join this group to help us with this work. The membership of the group has now been expanded to include two currently registered health practitioners and a family member.

We are also well underway with the development of a portal that would enable practitioners with a regulatory matter to track the progress of their matter. This will be available in 2024.

Please note, we regularly work with the Health Ombudsman and the Office of Health Ombudman (OHO) and include practitioner wellbeing in those discussions. I will ensure we continue to work with the OHO with a focus on processes that better support registered practitioners.

Yours sincerely



Heather Edwards
State Manager Queensland
Ahpra

CC: *Dr Lynne Coulson Barr—Health Ombudsman Queensland*
Erin O'Donnel—Policy Lead, AMAQ