



**The Royal Australasian College
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26 April 2016

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sent to: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Re: RACMA Submission to the Inquiry into the medical complaints process in Australia

The Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA) is a medical specialty college of more than 900 Fellows, Associate Fellows and trainees in public and private health settings across Australasia. The College sets standards and provides professional development and specialist qualifications in medical management and leadership to registered medical practitioners.

RACMA welcomes this opportunity to respond to the consultation of the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into the *Medical Complaints Process in Australia*.

RACMA has developed responses to the specific questions in the consultation document and these follow in the paragraphs below. RACMA agrees to this submission being treated as a public document and being cited in any reports that may result from this consultation process.

a) The prevalence of bullying and harassment in Australia's medical profession

We understand bullying and harassment in Australia's medical profession is prevalent, and that it affects both men and women, and is experienced across the profession.

RACMA surveyed its membership in 2015. The survey asked members to respond about their personal experience of bullying, harassment and discrimination, their experience of receiving complaints of bullying, harassment and discrimination, and their experience of observing bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The survey responses identified that:

- Bullying, harassment and discrimination in workplaces where we have members is prevalent for both men and women, particularly women. This is reported as prevalent over many years. i.e. over their careers and in training.



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- For bullying, the types of behaviour most commonly experienced include:
 - Intimidation, manipulation and/or unreasonable criticism
 - Exclusion from activities relevant to your role, or where other colleagues have been invited
 - Aggressive behaviour
 - Deliberate withholding of information that is important for effective work performance.
- There was a range of behaviours described for harassment, and based on the responses it appeared that some respondents had misinterpreted harassment for bullying or discrimination.
- RACMA survey respondents reported that the main perpetrators of bullying and harassment are medical staff management and administration staff.

b) Any barriers, whether real or perceived, to medical practitioners reporting bullying and harassment

The key barrier for medical practitioners taking action is the belief that it will adversely affect future career options. This is supported by the survey undertaken by RACMA in 2015 on bullying, harassment and discrimination and consultations with RACMA's membership. Additionally reasons cited are the perceived stress associated with filing a complaint and enduring an investigation, and the perception there is potential for victimisation as a result of raising the matter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karen Owen
Chief Executive