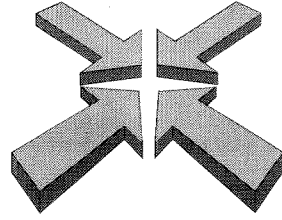




## Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils



### CPMEC Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing

#### Inquiry into Registration Processes and Support for Overseas Trained Doctors

##### *Introductory Comments*

The Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils (CPMEC) is the peak body for State and Territory Postgraduate Medical Education Councils (PMCs) in Australia. Membership includes the Education Committee of the Medical Council of New Zealand.

Postgraduate Medical Councils play a critical role in the clinical placement and quality of training, supervision and performance of junior doctors in the first two years of prevocational medical training. In addition, the majority of PMCs are actively involved in the assessment and upskilling of International Medical Graduates (Overseas Trained Doctors (OTDs)<sup>1</sup>) who enter the medical workforce at varying points in the professional development continuum, primarily those who work in salaried junior medical officer positions in the public hospital system while preparing for the Australian Medical Council clinical examination. PMCs also play an important role in assisting IMGs to navigate the complex immigration, registration and employment pathways they must negotiate to work in the Australian health system.

CPMEC has been concerned about supervision and support for IMGs for some time. In 2003 CPMEC hosted a meeting in Wellington, New Zealand to examine challenges for policy makers, health services, health professionals, organisations and the broader community. These included:

- Considering ways of best utilising their knowledge and skills;
- Providing properly accredited IMG orientation and educational programs;
- Recognising their impact on the local medical workforce, including demand for training and supervision;
- Issues of equity and fairness in relation to requirements for registration compared to domestic graduates; and

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<sup>1</sup> International Medical Graduates (IMGs) is our preferred terminology consistent with that used by the Australian Medical Council (AMC)

- Supervision and support, especially in more rural and remote settings<sup>2</sup>.

A 2008 study commissioned by the Victorian Department of Human Services reaffirmed the ‘importance of providing IMGs with opportunities for orientation, access to support and supervision.’<sup>3</sup>

### *Terms of Reference of the Inquiry*

CPMEC would like to stress that a significant number of IMGs are not able to access the Specialist Pathway and seek registration through the Standard Pathway, either through the AMC examination or through the new workplace assessment pathway. CPMEC is concerned that this is not adequately recognized in the terms of reference of this inquiry

Given the large increase in the numbers of domestic medical graduates in recent years and the growth in international full-fee paying students in Australian medical schools, competition for Standard Pathway and specialist vocational training places is likely to intensify over the next few years. IMGs are likely to be disadvantaged in recruitment processes where they are competing with Australian graduates.

It seems very likely that an increasing number of IMGs will not be part of any College vocational (specialist) training program. Therefore it is imperative that policy recommendations arising from the inquiry should recognize the need for continuing educational and other mentoring support for these IMGs.

### *Support Programs offered by PMCs*

The inquiry’s terms of reference include seeking reports on the support programs available through the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments, professional organisations and colleges to assist IMGs to meet registration requirements. Programs offered by Postgraduate Medical Councils (or equivalent bodies such as the NSW Clinical Education and Training Institute (CETI) and the South Australian Institute of Medical Education and Training (IMET)) for IMGs include:

- Pre-employment orientation programs and manuals based on the AMC Orientation Guidelines to enhance IMGs’ understanding of the Australian healthcare system and relevant communication and cultural issues, and assist in their transition to clinical practice in the new environment.<sup>4</sup>
- Pre-employment structured clinical interviews (PESCI). The purpose of the PESCI assessment is to establish whether an IMG has the knowledge, skills and experience to practise safely and effectively in the position for which provisional registration is being sought.
- Training programs and workshops for supervisors and clinicians involved in the education and training of IMGs. These programs aim to equip those

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<sup>2</sup> Workshop on Education and Training for Permanent Resident Overseas Trained Doctors, Wellington, New Zealand, CPMEC, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Barriers to Employment of International Medical Graduates Within the Victorian Public Health System – Research Report, Service & Workforce Planning Branch, Dept of Human Services, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Medical Council Orientation Guidelines for IMGs, 2007.

assisting IMGs with orientation and with the development of a personalised, competency and goal-based learning plan to help the IMG meet clinical, professional and organisational standards.

- IMG sub-committees in PMC governance structures to deal with issues relating to IMGs who are not enrolled in a specialist training program.

### *Recommendations*

The inquiry's terms of reference also include provision of suggestions for the enhancement and integration of these programs.

CPMEC would like to make the following recommendations:

- Consideration of future requirements for IMGs should be part of Health Workforce Australia's national health workforce plan and should not be addressed by individual jurisdictions through piece-meal, short term initiatives which are generally not sustainable.
- It is important not to dilute support for existing programs that are working well and targeting those IMGs who are not in a specialist training program. The importance of these programs will increase as IMGs face more intense competition for specialist training positions from increasing numbers of graduates from Australian medical schools
- There should be nationally consistent approaches and programs for the orientation, and up-skilling of IMGs to avoid unnecessary duplication and wastage of resources.
- There is a need for flexibility in training pathways for IMGs to take account of their skills and needs.
- There is a need for transparent Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures for assessment of IMGs by specialist Colleges. Prior learning may take place in the IMG's country of origin or in a non-specialist junior position in Australia. RPL should incorporate the outcome of robust workplace based assessment processes.
- There is a need for improved funding, support and recognition of clinical supervisors who tailor programs to meet the diverse needs of non-specialist IMGs and carry out assessments to meet Medical Board of Australia requirements.
- IMGs should have a voice in the policy making process.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Crotty'.

Professor Brendan Crotty

Chair  
CPMEC

3 February 2011