



5 September 2008

Ms Bronwyn Nardi  
Chair, Practitioner Regulation Subcommittee  
Health Workforce Principal Committee

Dear Ms Nardi

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in respect to the proposed Bill A in relation to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The College is supportive, as is the AMA, the CPMC and other professional groups of the national registration of health professionals. We welcome moves towards consistency and reduction of red tape and we wish to play a constructive role with Government in ensuring that the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme works effectively. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists as a member of the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) also supports submissions made by the CPMC in relation to this matter. In this context we wish to make the following points:

- Accreditation of education institutions granting qualifications in the health professions should adhere to international guidelines and standards.
- In keeping with international guidelines, decisions regarding accreditation and standards for medical education training are best delegated to an independent national body with appropriate expertise. In relation to medical practitioners this function is best performed by the Australian Medical Council.
- Medical specialist colleges must continue to play an important role in prevocational and specialist training ensuring the highest clinical standards and assessing competencies to protect patient safety.
- The medical profession must be consulted and have input into decisions before they are finalised.
- All professional boards must be consulted in relation to any proposed scope of practice changes.

More detailed comments in relation to the Consultation Paper are provided in the attachment to this letter.

Yours sincerely

Professor Mark Khangure  
President

CC: Members of the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges  
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## **THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGISTS**

### **Response to the Consultation Paper on Issues Supplementary to the Intergovernmental Agreement for a National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the Health Professions to be Included in the First Bill (Bill A)**

#### **1 Objective or purposes of the Act and commencement**

##### **1.1 Objects and purposes**

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) is supportive of the objects and purposes of the Scheme and operating principles recognising that all five of the stated objectives are important and necessary but the primary and most important objective is to "provide for the protection of the public by ensuring that only practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered."

##### **1.2 Commencement**

The RANZCR notes the tight timelines to commencement and consequent need to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. Consequently it is highly desirable that the legislation should focus only on those changes that are necessary to bring the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) into effect.

#### **2 Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council**

RANZCR notes that the Ministerial Council will give final approval of 'registration and accreditation standards' and is in agreement with this proposal provided it is clearly understood that the drafting of proposed registration and accreditation standards is a task undertaken by the relevant professional body(ies) under the oversight of the relevant National Board.

In keeping with international guidelines, it is RANZCR's view that decisions regarding accreditation and standards for medical education training are best delegated to the existing Australian Medical Council.

RANZCR is of the view that with respect to the medical profession, professional standards - ie standards in respect of education, training and specialist recognition - pertaining to a particular speciality group should remain the intellectual property of the relevant accredited professional body and be made available under licence for use in relation to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

RANZCR regards it as essential that any request for emendation or review of registration and accreditation standards should be referred back through the relevant National Board to relevant professional body(ies). It would then be the responsibility of the professional body(ies) to provide advice to the National Board taking account of the policy directions set for the Scheme by the Ministerial Council. Where the Ministerial Council chooses not to accept the advice of a National Board the matter should be referred back to the National Board for further consideration and open consultation with all stakeholders.

##### **2.1 Publication of decisions**

RANZCR welcomes the provision for proposed transparency with regard to all written directions of the Ministerial Council and regards this as essential.

Consistent with the provisions for transparency in relation to the Ministerial Council, RANZCR recommends that the advice of the National Boards, or bodies acting under delegation by a National Board, in relation to policy issues and registration and accreditation standards forwarded for approval by the Ministerial Council should also be published. (2.1)

### **3 Australian Health Workforce Advisory Council**

RANZCR regards it as essential that the Australian Health Workforce Advisory Council should include high level representation of professional medical expertise.

RANZCR agrees that provision is needed for resignation and removal. With regards to removal of members of the Council, the legislation must provide for appropriate appeals processes. (3.5)

RANZCR agrees that provision of required for any immunity for members of the Advisory Council as is necessary and appropriate to the exercise of their advisory role. (3.6)

RANZCR agrees with the proposed requirement that the Advisory Council submit an annual report to the Ministerial Council.(3.8)

### **4 National Agency**

RANZCR notes that it is proposed that the Agency will set business rules for the development of professional standards (not professional content, which is to be set by the national boards).

RANZCR agrees that it is desirable that common business rules be adopted however it is essential that such rules be developed in close consultation with the National Boards.

The Agency Management Committee should include high level medical practitioner representation. Such representation would provide the benefit of direct advice regarding the impact of the Agency's operations on the workforce and upon the provision of medical services and clinical practice. Representation should be at a senior level in order to facilitate liaison and communication with the medical professions. The role of the Agency Management Committee should be explicitly defined to ensure that it in no way over-rides the independence of the National Boards or, professional bodies and committees (eg The Australian Medical Council) carrying out roles delegated roles, in providing advice directly to the Ministerial Council and to the Australian Health Workforce Advisory Council or in performing their responsibilities under the Scheme.

In respect of the support provided by the Agency to the National Boards, RANZCR notes that it will be important to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to support not only functions previously undertaken by the Medical Boards but also to support functions hitherto undertaken by the Australian Medical Council. Provision should also be made for the retention of the Australian Medical Council's and Medical Boards' existing secretariats and infrastructures in order to ensure a smooth transition and to ensure the continued independence of the Australian Medical Council. (4.9)

It is essential that the Agency's role be one of support and facilitation and that neither the Agency nor the Agency Management Committee should intervene in the direct line of accountability between the National Boards and the Ministerial Council for the provision of advice and specifically, for the provision of proposed standards for registration and accreditation.

In regards to financial provisions, RANZCR notes that the fees and charges are to be agreed between the Agency and the National Boards. Such involvement is essential to ensure that the National Boards receive adequate support and that the fees and charges are reasonable. (4.10)

RANZCR notes that it is proposed that the Scheme should at some point become self-funding. While this is a desirable principle, the viability of self-funded implementation will require review once the interim establishment phase is complete. RANZCR notes in

particular that existing bodies not only perform registration and accreditation functions but also "related workforce functions". In as much as these functions support governments and employers in fulfilling their responsibilities, the appropriateness of ongoing cost sharing arrangements should be considered.

All transitional costs should be borne by government.

The National Boards must also be directly involved in decisions regarding the resources and staff at their disposal. Provision is needed within these resources for appropriate sitting fees and allowances for National Board members and for appropriate indemnity provisions for Board members or persons acting on their behalf.( 5.3 and 5.7)

RANZCR agrees with the need for appropriate indemnity provisions in regard to persons assisting the National Agency in the performance of its functions (including the Agency Management Committee and staff).(4.6)

RANZCR welcomes the provision for agreement between the agency and each Board regarding the provision of fee refunds, waivers and reductions and the imposition of late or restoration fees.(4.10)

RANZCR agrees with the provision that the National Agency be required to prepare an Annual Report each financial year and consolidated with reports from the National Boards with the proviso that the reports of the National Boards be included in full. (4.12)

## **5 National Boards**

RANZCR is agreeable to the proposed title of Australian Medical Practitioners Board (AMPB).

RANZCR is of the view however, that the roles assigned to the Australian Medical Practitioner Board, ie registration and accreditation, need to be delineated. This delineation is in keeping with World Health Organisation/World Federation for Medical Education Guidelines for Accreditation of basic Medical Education (Geneva/Copenhagen 2005). The role of accreditation is most appropriately undertaken by the Australian Medical Council and that the Australian Medical Council must be adequately resourced to fulfil this role. The Australian Medical Council already has in place a structure and processes that ensure its autonomy and independence from government, the medical schools and the profession. (5.11)

To ensure transparency the advice of the National Boards to the Ministerial Council and the Australian Health Workforce Advisory Council should be published. The Australian Medical Council should also be able to make recommendations directly to the Ministerial Council regarding issues of policy and proposed standards for accreditation. This advice should also be published.

RANZCR notes that the IGA implies that the National Boards will not develop the accreditation and registration standards but will ensure that this development occurs. RANZCR supports this interpretation provided that this is taken to mean that the Ministerial Council will delegate to each National Board the responsibility for assigning responsibility for development of accreditation and registration standards to the appropriate professional body/committee, for example the relevant specialist medical college. Such professional bodies would in turn be accountable to the relevant National Board for ensuring that standards were developed in accordance with the prescribed business rules and consistent with the policies determined by the Ministerial Council. (5.11)

With respect to the medical profession, RANZCR envisages that responsibility for the development of accreditation standards would be assigned to the Australian Medical

Council and through the Australian Medical Council to the relevant accredited Colleges. The AMPB should also delegate to the Australian Medical Council responsibility for accrediting educational institutions, training programs and courses.

While noting that 'board members will not represent any professional body or organisation', RANZCR proposes that open communication and consultation between Boards and external stakeholders should be encouraged.

RANZCR also notes that there is no proposal for a mechanism which would allow the various National Boards to confer or communicate with one another. This is a weakness in the proposed structure. RANZCR considers that while the autonomy of each National Board must be respected, the National Boards should be required and enabled to confer with each other so that their advice to the Ministerial Council is informed by the perspectives of other professional groups. Formalised and documented consultation processes would support the provision of quality advice to the Ministerial Council. Such consultation would help ensure that the recommendations presented were supportive of the flexible team based practice increasing required within the Health sector. It is essential that all professional boards are consulted in relation to any proposed scope of practice changes.

Finally it is essential that the National Boards, and the bodies to which responsibilities are delegated, are adequately resourced to fulfil their functions and that they have capacity to commission advice from external agencies including professional bodies when required. Such resourcing is essential to ensure that advice can be provided in a timely fashion.

RANZCR agrees with the proposal that the legislation provides that sitting fees and allowances be determined by the Ministerial Council. (5.3)

RANZCR proposes that appropriate appeals processes need to be put in place in relation to the termination of the members of Boards appointed under the Scheme. (5.6)

RANZCR agrees with the need for appropriate indemnity provisions in regard to Board members and persons acting on their behalf. (5.7)

RANZCR is supportive of the proposed reporting requirements with the proviso that the contributions made by the National Boards to the Agency-coordinated annual report should be incorporated in full. (5.8)

RANZCR agrees with the provision that the Ministerial Council have capacity to review the size and composition of boards from time to time, in consultation with the relevant profession, provided that the stipulation should remain that at least 50 per cent of members (in addition to the chair) should be members of the relevant profession. (5.10)

## **6 Other Matters**

Undertakings have been given previously that the legislation for the new national Scheme would provide indemnity for Medical Colleges and their Fellows and officers engaged in the assessment of the qualifications of International Medical Graduates. The legislation relating to Board members and persons acting on a Board's behalf will need to be sufficiently broad to encompass also the Medical Colleges and their Fellows/officers.

With regard to terms of appointment the College agrees that these should be limited but suggests that appointments should be on a rotating basis to ensure continuity of expertise and memory. Provision is also needed to define eligibility for subsequent terms and limitation of the number of subsequent terms of office.