



MEDIA RELEASE

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CAIRNS JUNIOR DOCTORS FEEL UNSAFE AT WORK

The annual *Resident Hospital Health Check* has found 33 per cent of Queensland's junior doctors feel unsafe at work and 53 per cent are worried fatigue from long work hours might cause them to make a clinical error.

In Cairns, fewer doctors felt unsafe (29 per cent) due to verbal or physical intimidation or threats from patients or other staff, but slightly fewer were worried about making mistakes because of fatigue (50 per cent).

ASMOFQ (Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Queensland) and AMA Queensland's Committee of Doctors in Training (CDT) surveyed 723 interns, house officers and other junior doctors to compare employment conditions in public hospitals around the state.

This year it gave Cairns Hospital an overall grade of B-.

"State-wide, incidents of bullying and harassment remain unacceptably high and require a sustained and systematic response to ensure a work environment that promotes staff and patient safety," CDT Chair Dr Elise Witter said.

Over 50 per cent of respondents had fatigue concerns, with 18 doctors working more than 24 hours of overtime in a fortnight and 72 doctors working between 14 and 24 hours of overtime on average each fortnight. Only one in 10 doctors worked a standard fortnight with no overtime.

"Chronic understaffing means junior doctors are working significant amounts of overtime, with fatigue and overwork affecting our ability to make good judgements and perform to the best of our ability," Dr Witter said.

"Patients deserve our best."

Dr Witter said while it was heartening to see an increase in the number of doctors being properly paid for their overtime (89 per cent, compared to 85 per cent in 2022), 43 per cent of doctors claimed only part of their overtime, with an additional 9 per cent claiming no overtime, despite working the extra hours.

"It says a lot about the culture in Queensland hospitals when so many doctors claim only some of their overtime," Dr Witter said.

Almost 40 per cent of junior doctors believe claiming overtime will negatively affect their workplace assessment, while 22 per cent told us they were advised not to claim their overtime, most often by a more senior medical officer."

ASMOFQ President Dr Hau Tan said the *Resident Hospital Health Check* was an important survey to check in on our junior doctors.

“ASMOFQ fights hard for the working conditions and rights of all hospital doctors, and our junior doctors are a particularly important part of our workforce,” Dr Tan said.

“It’s critical that junior doctors are paid for all the hours they work, and that overtime and fatigue are managed appropriately.

“Because they have just started their careers, they are also vulnerable to bullying, discrimination and harassment, as well as not speaking up for fear of harm to their career progression.

“ASMOFQ will continue to support and advocate for doctors to ensure that their workplaces are safe and their working conditions are protected.”

AMA Queensland President Dr Maria Boulton said early career doctors were among the most vulnerable financially and emotionally.

“Our most junior doctors are in their first few years of dealing with life-or-death situations, which takes a huge emotional toll,” Dr Boulton said.

“It’s wonderful to see a greater focus on supporting junior doctors, but we still have a way to go to provide a more positive and support culture for our doctors.

“AMA Queensland would still like to see greater efforts at retaining existing junior doctors by prioritising their wellbeing and managing workload.

“We know that trainee doctors pore over the results of the *Resident Hospital Health Check* when they make their decisions about their next year’s placements and we hope this report helps them to make choices that are in their best interests and in the best interests of the communities they serve.”

Survey respondents said the top three most important domains when making a decision about placements are:

1. Clinical rotation preferencing and allocation

63 per cent of Cairns doctors were satisfied their clinical rotation preferences were taken into consideration.

2. Being appropriately paid for unrostered overtime worked

91 per cent of Cairns doctors were paid for the unrostered overtime that they claimed.

3. Annual Leave process and allocations.

66 per cent of Cairns doctors were satisfied preferences for leave were taken into consideration.

Find the full 2023 *Resident Hospital Health Check* [HERE](#).

Background

- The eighth annual ASMOFQ/AMA Queensland *Resident Hospital Health Check* was held over August and September, with 723 junior doctors across 37 hospitals taking part.
- Hospitals are scored from A to E. Data from all responses is used to calculate state

averages but results for individual hospitals are only reported when there were more than 15 respondents.

- 53 per cent reported that they had been concerned about making a clinical error due to fatigue related to long work hours (down from 58 per cent in 2022 and up from 51 per cent in 2021). 63 per cent were satisfied their leave preferences were taken into consideration, higher than 2022 (58 per cent) and 2021 (59 per cent).
- 47 per cent applied for professional development leave, down from 2022 (56 per cent), but up from 2021 (36 per cent). Leave was granted to 86 per cent of applicants, which appears to have steadily grown from 82 per cent and 79 per cent in 2022 and 2021 respectively.
- 61 per cent were satisfied that their clinical rotation preferences had been accommodated, and 36 per cent felt they were given adequate opportunities to be involved in research and auditing, compared to 43 per cent and 30 per cent respectively in 2022).
- 89 per cent of respondents reported being fully paid for claimed overtime, higher than in 2022 (85 per cent) and 2021 (76 per cent). Further, 22 per cent reported that they had been advised not to claim overtime payment by an administrative officer or Salaried Medical Officer and 39 per cent believed doing so would lead to a negative assessment (this is compared with 17 per cent and 26 per cent respectively in 2022).
- 31 per cent experienced bullying/discrimination/harassment, with a further 8 per cent witnessing one or more of these behaviours.
- 33 per cent reported that they had felt unsafe at work (28 per cent in 2022).
- Less than half of respondents were satisfied with the hospital facilities (47 per cent) and the quality of the formal teaching and training (48 per cent).

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NA – Not included last year due to low responses

Queensland 2023 Resident Hospital Health Check							
HOSPITAL	Access to annual leave	Career progression + development	Hours of work + overtime	Wellbeing + workplace culture	Bullying, discrimination + sexual harassment	OVERALL GRADE 2023	OVERALL CHANGE
Bundaberg Hospital	C	C+	B+	C+	C	C+	NA
Caboolture Hospital	B-	C	A-	C	C	C+	Up from C
Cairns Hospital	B-	B-	A-	B-	C+	B-	Up from C+
Gold Coast Hospital	C	C+	B+	B-	C+	C+	No change

Hervey Bay Hospital	C	C	B+	C	C-	C	NA
Ipswich Hospital	C	C	B-	D+	C	C	Down from C+
Logan Hospital	A-	C	B+	C+	C+	B-	Up from C
Mackay Base Hospital	C	C	B	C	C+	C	NA
Mater Brisbane Hospital	B	C+	B+	B	C+	C	NA
Mount Isa Hospital	A	B-	A-	C+	B-	B	NA
Princess Alexandra Hospital	B-	C+	B+	C	B-	B-	Up from C
Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital	B+	B-	A+	B+	B	B+	NA
Queensland Children's Hospital	C+	B-	A-	C	C+	B-	NA
Redcliffe Hospital	A	B	A	B+	B	B+	Up from B
Rockhampton Hospital	C+	D+	C	D	D+	C-	NA
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	C	C	B	C	C+	C	Down from C+
Sunshine Coast University Hospital	C+	C	B+	B-	C	B-	Up from C+
The Prince Charles Hospital	B-	C+	B	C	C	C+	Up from C
Toowoomba Hospital	C+	C	A-	C	B-	B-	Up from C+
Townsville Hospital	C	C+	A-	C	C	C+	Up from C

ENDS

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