

2 August 2023

The Hon Shannon Fentiman MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services
Minister for Women

Mr Michael Walsh
Acting Director-General
Queensland Health

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Subject: HHS' meetings re implementation of wellbeing measures under *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* amendments

Dear Minister and Director-General

As you are aware, the Queensland Legislative Assembly passed amendments to the *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011* in April 2023 that require Hospital and Health Services (HHS') and their boards to proactively promote a culture to support the health, safety and wellbeing of staff in public sector health service facilities.

AMA Queensland wholeheartedly welcomed these changes and had been calling for them for some time.

Since the amendments specifically impose an obligation on all HHS' to implement associated measures, AMA Queensland wrote to all 16 HHS' in May 2023 recommending actions each HHS could take, as developed by our Committee of Doctors in Training (CDT). The response from HHS' was overwhelmingly positive and we have now met with a number of HHS executives across our state.

What we learned is that many HHS' have already begun implementing some proactive, tangible measures that directly contribute to doctor wellbeing and align with our CDT's recommendations. We congratulate these HHS' for initiating action swiftly after the legislative changes.

That said, HHSs stated they have not shared their actions with other HHS' as there is no appropriate mechanism for collaboration, education or joint resourcing. We identified this as a missed opportunity for improvement across all our public health services by learning from each other about what works in supporting staff wellbeing.

One key initiative was the roll-out of Medtasker, an integrated software platform that assists in efficient management of patients including ward calls, bookings, reviews, priorities, rostering and other service tasks. Some HHS' advised they have requested approval for its implementation but have been waiting up to 4 years without response. In our discussions, some of the smaller HHS' stated that they didn't have the budget for this. The positive feedback and benefits suggest consideration by Queensland Health to investigate the possibility of a statewide rollout.

Another positive measure was the Indigenous Interns Pathway, currently in place at Townsville HHS. The program provides culturally appropriate support and mentorship for Indigenous doctors and the HHS' executives reported high rates of success and intern satisfaction with the program. We know approximately 30% of all Indigenous doctors leave

the profession so implementing the pathway in all HHS' would be a step in the right direction. This cannot happen until its details and successes are shared across all HHS'.

Finally, doctors remain extremely concerned about the ramifications of speaking up about issues affecting patient safety or staff wellbeing such as bullying and harassment. During our meetings we heard various understandings of the whistleblower protection from the executives and would encourage Queensland Health to conduct an urgent education session for all HHS executives on their responsibilities. We note the Honourable Alan Wilson KC delivered his final report on the review of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* to the Attorney-General on 19 June 2023 and hope to see any recommendations implemented as a priority.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss issues raised during our future meetings with Queensland Health.

Yours sincerely



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President
AMA Queensland



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