

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cairns junior doctors feel unsafe, fatigued at work

AMA Queensland-ASMOFQ Resident Hospital Health Check 2024

Cairns Hospital has slipped down the rankings in the latest AMA Queensland-ASMOFQ *Resident Hospital Health Check*.

The overall grade of C+ was down on the B- Cairns Hospital scored in the 2023 survey of junior doctors from across the state and a big improvement on the C+ it scored in 2023.

Statewide, 29 per cent of respondents felt their safety had been compromised at work and 46 per cent were concerned about making a clinical error due to fatigue caused by overwork.

At Cairns, the proportion of junior doctors reporting fearing making a fatigue-based error was lower at 36 per cent, but two in five (40 per cent) reported safety concerns.

"This is the fourth consecutive year that about 30 per cent of doctors in training (DITs) have reported safety concerns at work and the seventh that about 50 per cent have reported fears of making a fatigue-based error," AMA Queensland Committee of Doctors in Training (CDT) Chair Dr Elise Witter said.

"It is beyond disappointing that we are not seeing any change in these statistics. Everyone deserves to feel safe at work. What we are hearing from our junior doctors, particularly those on ward call overnight, is that they do not feel safe walking between hospital buildings.

"Disturbingly, 50 per cent of junior doctors are already feeling some form of burnout.

"We clearly need better workforce retention strategies and incentives to keep these doctors in the profession they have studied and worked so hard for."

The survey of 831 doctors in training at hospitals across the state found a decrease in respondents reporting experiencing or witnessing bullying, discrimination or harassment – down to 35 per cent in 2024 from 48 per cent two years earlier.

However, 81 per cent of respondents said they were concerned about negative consequences personally for reporting an incident, up from 75 per cent in 2023.

"We cannot afford to have a new generation of doctors coming up who are afraid to report bad behaviour," AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim said.

"AMA Queensland and ASMOFQ will take these survey results to the new government and demand change.

"We met with every Hospital and Health Service (HHS) following last year's RHC to outline the results and offer practical actions to address issues. These meetings were positive and led to good outcomes.

“We will do the same with these results.”

There was a drop in respondents reporting being fully paid for claimed overtime and 19 per cent reported they had been advised not to claim overtime.

“ASMOFQ fights hard for the working conditions and rights of all hospital doctors, and it is critical that overtime and fatigue are managed for junior doctors,” ASMOFQ President Dr Hau Tan said.

“They have just started their careers and are vulnerable to bullying, discrimination and harassment.

“With a new Queensland Government coming to power and the next Medical Officer Certified Agreement (MOCA) negotiation period about to commence, now is the time for the Health Minister to commit to improving the working conditions of junior doctors.

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

While doctors from 40 hospitals completed the survey, only 17 hospitals had enough participants to be statistically valid and included in this report card.

“Many hospitals actively encouraged their junior doctors to take part in this survey. We thank them for their commitment to finding out what their doctors in training are experiencing and what can be improved,” Dr Yim said.

“However, it is extremely disappointing that bureaucrats at some of our biggest hospitals actively discouraged their doctors from taking part, presumably because they feared what our survey would find. This points to a culture of cover-up and cowardice – the exact behaviours that we are attempting to identify and fix through this survey.”

“We want a culture of active feedback and reporting without fear of repercussion for our doctors to ensure that we can continually improve our healthcare system and service to our communities.”

AMA Queensland CDT has also released a separate *Ward Call Survey* report. The survey of 280 junior doctors found that 51 per cent were concerned about staffing levels and two in five felt unsafe when travelling between wards overnight.

What is the Resident Hospital Health Check?

- ASMOFQ (Australian Salaried Medical Officers’ Federation Queensland) and AMA Queensland’s Committee of Doctors in Training (CDT) have surveyed junior doctors in Queensland hospitals about their work conditions, work culture and training opportunities every year since 2017.
- A total of 831 junior doctors completed the survey this year, a 15 per cent increase on 2023.
- 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 20 or more responses.
- Many junior doctors use the RHHC results each year when deciding on what hospital and where they want to work for the following year.

The Resident Hospital Health Check is available [here](#). The AMA Queensland CDT Ward Call Survey is available [here](#).

NA - not included last year due to low response rate

Resident Hospital Health Check 2024

HOSPITAL	Access to annual leave	Career progression + development	Hours of work + overtime	Wellbeing + workplace culture	Bullying, discrimination + sexual harassment	OVERALL GRADE 2024	OVERALL CHANGE
Bundaberg Hospital	B+	B-	A	B	C+	B	● Up from C+
Caboolture Hospital	C-	C	A-	C	C+	C+	● No change
Cairns Hospital	C	C	A-	C+	B-	C+	● Down from B-
Gold Coast Hospital	D-	C	B+	C	B-	C+	● No change
Hervey Bay Hospital	C-	C	A-	C	C	C	● No change
Logan Hospital	D+	C	B+	C	B-	C	● Down from B-
Mackay Base Hospital	D+	C-	A-	C	C+	C	● No change
Mater Brisbane Hospital	D	C	B+	C	C+	C	● Down from B
Princess Alexandra Hospital	D+	C	B+	C	B-	C+	● Down from B-
Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Hospital	C	C	A	C+	B-	B-	● Down from B+
Redcliffe Hospital	C-	C-	A	C+	C+	C+	● Down from B+
Redland - Combined Hospital and Health Facility	C+	C+	A	C	B	B-	● NA
Rockhampton Hospital	D+	D+	B-	C	C+	C	● Up from C-
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital	D+	C	A+	C	C+	C	● No change
Sunshine Coast University Hospital	C	C	A+	C+	B-	C+	● Down from B-
The Prince Charles Hospital	D	C	A-	B-	C+	C	● Down from C+
Toowoomba Hospital	C-	C	A	C+	B+	B-	● No change