



AMA

2026 *Intern Guide*

Your essential companion for navigating the challenges, opportunities, and support networks of your intern year.

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Dr Kit Smith
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AMA President's message

Dr Danielle McMullen, Federal AMA President

Welcome to the next chapter of your medical journey. Internship is a time of tremendous growth and transformation. I recall my own first days on the wards: the mix of nerves and excitement, the steep learning curves, and the camaraderie formed with colleagues who understood the unique pressures of those long hospital shifts. I started my internship by jumping

straight into a rural emergency department term, and it was a fantastic way to start. There were moments of uncertainty, but also profound satisfaction as I began to understand the privilege and responsibility of directly caring for people. As you'll discover, textbooks and tutorials can only teach you so much — it's the hands-on experience of assessing patients and caring for patients every day that truly shapes who you are as a doctor and reminds you why you chose this path.

The Australian Medical Association stands proudly with you as you take these next steps. We are a trusted national organisation that unites doctors from all specialties and career stages. By joining the AMA, you will become part of a national community dedicated to improving healthcare for

patients and the working lives of doctors.

We advocate for fair, safe working conditions, strong supervision, and ongoing education to help every doctor thrive. Through federal policy work, we champion intern welfare, push for adequate hospital resourcing, and fight for sensible rostering and safe hours. We've got your back on wellbeing, professional development, and your right to a supportive workplace. With a dedicated secretariat in Canberra, and links right across the country, the federal AMA is well connected with key decision-makers in government and Parliament — ensuring your voice is heard where it matters most. There are many ways you can help strengthen our advocacy — whether through councils and committees or at one of our events.

You'll have the chance to raise the issues that matter most to you. I first joined the AMA as a medical student and joined my local NSW doctors-in-training committee from internship onwards. I was inspired by the power of unity then, and I remain so today. It is an honour to now lead the AMA, and I hope you will join us.

Our inaugural federal AMA Intern Guide is a companion guide, designed to support, inform, and inspire you as you embark on your career as a doctor. As you navigate the highs and lows of internship, remember that you are not alone. Reach out to your colleagues, supervisors, and to the AMA — we are here to support you every step of the way.



Queensland Branch of the AMA

Leading Queensland's doctors

The Queensland Branch of the Australian Medical Association represents and supports doctors across the state with a strong, united national voice.

Our well-resourced national office represents you on many federal government issues including Medicare; medicine regulation; private health sector policy; aged care, and the regulation of health practitioners.

The federal AMA is widely acknowledged as Australia's most influential medico-political association and has won major advocacy-related awards. Our access to politicians and key decision makers in Canberra is unparalleled.

Queensland doctors can join the federal AMA's Queensland Branch directly to stay connected to national advocacy, workplace support, and the full suite of federal AMA member benefits.

Membership ensures your voice continues to be heard as we fight to shape the national health agenda. As a member of the federal AMA, you will remain part of a strong, influential community of doctors across the country, working to strengthen the profession and improve healthcare across Australia.



What we do for members

In 2025 alone we met with decision and policy makers more than 440 times. Our advocacy results in changes on national health policy decisions at the highest levels. The federal AMA's Queensland Branch delivers value to members through national advocacy and representation on:

- Medicare reform through our national Modernise Medicare campaign
- hospital performance and funding through our national Clear the Hospital Logjam campaign
- medical workforce and training
- general practice sustainability
- public health issues
- private health sector reform.
- the AMA exclusively produces and publishes the nationally recognised List of Medical Services Feeslist, free to members of the Queensland Branch of federal AMA.





To the future leaders:

A welcome to our interns

Dr Sanjay Hettige, Federal AMA Council of Doctors in Training Chair

Congratulations on reaching this milestone in your medical career. As Chair of the AMA Council of Doctors in Training, it is a real privilege to introduce you to the federal AMA Intern Guide. This resource has been built with interns in mind, shaped by the experiences of doctors who have walked the same path you are about to begin.

There will be late-night calls, moments that make your heart race, and days where you feel like you're finally finding your feet. You will learn quickly, often on the fly, and you will do it alongside your peers. Many of them will become the people you celebrate with, complain with, and rely on for the rest of your career. Right now, you might be feeling excited, nervous, overwhelmed, or all of the above. That is completely normal. Just remember you are not doing this alone. Support is there when you need it, and this guide is here to help you navigate one of the most challenging and rewarding stages of your journey so far.

This is the time to make full use of what the AMA offers, including workplace advocacy, wellbeing resources, professional development, and clear guidance on safe working conditions. These are not add-ons. They exist because they genuinely make a difference to your training and your safety. The AMA Council of Doctors in Training is committed to making sure interns are heard at every level of decision-making in health. We advocate for fair pay, safe working hours, proper supervision, and equitable access to training opportunities. The conversations we have with governments, colleges and hospitals are shaped by what we hear from interns on the ground.

This guide reflects our commitment to supporting you as doctors and as individuals. I encourage you to use it throughout the year, both as a reference and as a reminder that you have a whole community behind you. Reach out to your colleagues, your supervisors, or the AMA when you need help or advice. The challenges ahead are real, but so is the support around you. You're stepping into a year that will shape your career and your confidence more than you might expect.

Welcome to the journey.

AMA MEMBER BENEFITS

Join Australia's peak medical professional association, advocating together for your rights and better health outcomes for our communities.

Benefits of the AMA include:



Medical journal of Australia

22 editions of the highly-respected journal every year.



Policy and advocacy

Advocacy on important issues that matter most to you.



Limited legal assistance

General advice on routine legal matters impacting doctors.



Workplace relations

Advisors to help guide you through any workplace issues.



AMA neXt tool

An interactive online tool comparing national employment conditions



Events and webinars

CPD-accredited events and webinars for upskilling and career growth.



Wellbeing support services

Free and confidential 24/7 counselling and peer support.



Coaching services and career solutions

Designed to support doctors across their entire career lifecycle.

Please scan the QR code to view all membership benefits



An interview with a doctor in training

Dr Natasha Abeysekera

Doctor in Training, Dermatology unaccredited registrar and AMA26 Convenor

When and where did you undertake your intern year?

I did my intern year in 2020 at the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital.

What did you find was the biggest challenge during your intern year?

Honestly? Moving states! It was a huge shift — new hospital, new city, no established support network. I had to put a lot of energy into building new friendships while simultaneously learning how to be a doctor. And then there was the paperwork... I learned more about forms, faxes (yes, actual faxes!), and hospital admin than I ever expected in medical school.

I also had a good dose of imposter syndrome. A lot of people already knew each other, were comfortable in the hospital, and were juggling research or master's degrees. I felt like I was playing catch-up from day one.

How did you overcome your hurdles?

With time, perspective, and a bit of self-kindness. I tried to stay focused on running my own race — being a good doctor for my patients, a supportive teammate, and a present friend and family member. Something that really helped was counting the small wins: submitting a research protocol, getting to teaching, finishing my discharge summaries on time, or even making it to Pilates. Even on days when nothing felt "big," I had still achieved something.

What is one piece of advice you wish you had been given during this period?

Carry snacks everywhere. (Only half a joke.)

But more seriously, I wish I had listened to the advice I was already given: take it easy on yourself. Don't overload intern year with extra commitments.

Give yourself time to learn the practical side of medicine — it's a big enough transition on its own, and you don't need to add more pressure.

How are you now participating with the AMA, and how are you finding this valuable?

Moving states meant rebuilding my community from scratch, and the AMA has been a huge part of helping me find my people. Beyond the friendships, it makes me feel connected to the bigger picture — the advocacy, the system-level improvements, and knowing we're working to make things better for both patients and doctors across Queensland and Australia.

Dr Abeysekera is the AMA26 National Conference convenor.

To register for AMA26, please visit: ama.com.au/events



Dr Tash's top 5 helpful hints for interns:

- 1. Prioritise sleep.** Truly. Everything feels easier when you're rested.
- 2. Stock your locker like your future self will thank you.** Toothbrush, toothpaste, and your favourite non-perishables. My stash includes caramel latte sachets, earl grey, honey oats, noodles, tiny teddies and rice cakes — no judgement; it has saved me and several colleagues more than once.
- 3. Ask for help — always.** Whether it's "Where's that form?" or "Why did you choose that treatment?" - people are kinder than you think, and you're never expected to know everything.
- 4. Get yourself a GP.** Book a simple "getting to know you" appointment NOW. When you eventually need care, you'll be grateful you already have someone.
- 5. Preload AMH, ETG and UpToDate on your phone.** You'll use them constantly. It saves time, reduces stress, and means you always have reliable information at hand.

INTERN CHECKLIST

Your essential guide for a successful first year

Starting your internship can feel both exciting and overwhelming, but having a clear roadmap from day one makes all the difference. The transition into clinical practice is smoother when you understand your environment, communicate effectively, stay organised, and look after your wellbeing. The following guide outlines practical tips across orientation, teamwork, patient care, administration, professionalism, and rural practice—designed to help you navigate your new responsibilities with confidence. Remember, you're part of a team, and support is always available as you grow into your role.

1. Getting started & orientation

- Attend a thorough handover with outgoing interns; ask questions about the rotation and unit specifics.
- Check your pager and join team group chats (WhatsApp, Teams, etc.).
- Identify your supervisor and key contacts (registrars, consultants, nurses); know how to reach them quickly.
- Familiarise yourself with rosters, shift swaps, overtime approval, and meeting schedules.
- Locate essential equipment and kits (e.g., HALO kits in rural hospitals); know where to find forms and handover documents.

2. Teamwork & communication

- Introduce yourself to the team and allied health staff; learn everyone's roles and preferred communication channels.
- Respect and get to know your nurses; understand their skills and how you can support each other.
- Ask for help early and often—no one expects you to know everything.
- Take handovers seriously; ensure they are clear, concise, and use frameworks like ISBAR (Identify, Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation).
- Trust your colleagues and build a supportive network; pay it forward by helping students and peers.

3. Clinical practice & patient care

- To prepare for rounds; print patient lists and review overnight events.
- Know your clinical responsibilities: ward rounds, clinics, theatre, and allied health meetings.
- Prioritise and triage jobs; urgent patient needs come first.
- Master basic procedures (e.g., cannulas, IDCs, NGTs), prescribing common medications, and ordering investigations.
- Document everything contemporaneously; use templates and ensure discharge summaries are up to date.
- Know escalation pathways for deteriorating patients and when to call for help (registrar, MET call, retrievals).

4. Organisation & administration

- Keep a diary or clipboard with patient details, jobs, and priorities.
- Understand discharge planning, booking outpatient appointments, and chasing results for discharged patients.
- Learn how to arrange shift swaps, overtime, and complete timesheets.
- Save key clinical resources, guidelines, and contacts on your phone for quick access.

5. Wellbeing & professionalism

- Take regular breaks, eat well, stay hydrated, and look after your physical and mental health.
- Debrief after difficult cases; seek support from peers, mentors, or formal services if needed.
- Maintain professionalism: be punctual, honest about your limitations, and respect patient confidentiality.
- Cultivate interests and relationships outside medicine; balance is key for long-term success.
- Familiarise yourself with your rights and workplace conditions; know where to seek help for workplace issues.

6. Rural & remote tips (if applicable)

- Know your environment: key contacts, equipment locations, and local protocols.
- Use telehealth and retrieval services early for advice and patient transfers.
- Build rapport with small teams; respect and communication are vital in rural settings.

Remember: You are not alone—support is always available. Be kind to yourself and others, and don't hesitate to ask for help. Good luck with your internship!

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Doctors Health Services Pty Ltd (Drs4Drs) is a national not for profit organisation dedicated to the well-being of doctors and medical students.

Established by the medical profession for the medical profession.

HOW WE DO THIS:

Through a network of doctors' health advisory and referral services, independent, free, safe, supportive and confidential services are available across Australia.

WHO WE ARE HERE FOR:

Drs4Drs provides support for any doctor, medical students and their families.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Deepen your understanding of doctors' health needs with our educational module, designed to help you care for yourself and others in the medical field.

EDUCATION AND WORKSHOPS:

Find out how we can assist with providing access to workshops and educational resources tailored to the needs of doctors and medical students.

GET IN TOUCH

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EMAIL: enquiries@drs4drs.com.au

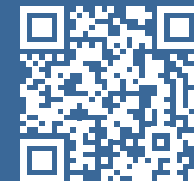
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Each State and Territory offers independent, free, and confidential health advisory services, with doctors trained in doctors' health.





Leading Change in a Connected World

28 - 29 AUGUST 2026

AMA26 is the perfect opportunity for doctors in training to expand their professional horizons, offering unparalleled access to networking with medical professionals from every specialty and career stage.

With its theme, Leading Change in a Connected World, the conference features interactive workshops and sessions designed to:

- strengthen leadership skills
- empower you to drive positive change in your workplace
- enhance your ability to collaborate effectively.

Attendees can also engage directly in key advocacy discussions gaining:

- valuable insight into the AMA's advocacy priorities
- opportunities to share their own perspectives as emerging medical leaders.

Scan QR code to register



Your career info:

Your career grows here. This section provides you with essential tools and key contacts to guide you through your first year and support your professional journey every step of the way.

The AMA neXt tool:

The AMA know that Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs) are complex, hard to find and hard to read. It can be daunting navigating these EBAs and deciding where you want to take your career next. AMA neXt helps you cut through the weeds of EBA awards, giving you an easy-to-understand snapshot of important rights and conditions such as salary, base hours, penalty rates, and leave entitlements in each state and territory.

The tool allows you to print a summary of your chosen state or territory, and make a side-by-side comparison of two jurisdictions. You can use AMA neXt to better understand your collective rights, to compare your options, and even use it as an advocacy tool to improve the working rights of doctors.



AMA council and committee representation:

The AMA Council of Doctors in Training (CDT) represents the views and concerns of the AMA's doctors in training members regarding professional and workplace issues.

CDT develops policy on the implications for doctors in training of legislation and government policies, including medical education and training; vocational training programs; restrictions on the nature or location of medical practice; part-time and flexible postgraduate training; safe working hours, and workplace interaction with other health professionals.

As a member of the AMA, you are eligible to nominate for both your relevant state or territory and AMA Federal committee and councils.

Specialty training pathway guide:

With so many different medical specialties to choose from in Australia, making the decision to specialise in one can seem daunting.

To assist aspiring specialists, the AMA has developed our national Specialty Training Pathway Guide with input from the speciality Colleges. Use this guide to research particular specialties or compare the key attributes across specialties, such as entry requirements, cost and positions available.

Not sure what kind of doctor you want to be? Only available to AMA Members and AMA Student Members, can utilise our specialty training pathways guide to help inform your career decisions.

Professional development and careers:

Through AMA Victoria all AMA members have access to significantly discounted career, leadership, high-performance and professional development coaching, services and resources, delivered by a team of experienced and accredited coaches with extensive knowledge of the health sector and the career journey of a doctor.

Additionally, AMA Victoria's structured eight-month Mentoring Program supports doctors at all career stages after internship, with a particular focus on transition points. Whether you are seeking guidance or keen to share your experience, the program offers a rewarding opportunity to connect, reflect and grow with a peer in the profession.



Helpful contacts:

AMA: 1300 133 655 **or** memberservices@ama.com.au
Drs4Drs: 1300 374 377 **or** <https://www.drs4drs.com.au/>
Ahpra: 1300 419 495 **or** <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/>
CPD Home: 1800 273 466 **or** <https://mycpd.cpdhome.org.au/>

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