



Dear Colleague

As you will probably be aware, the Independent Review of Workplace Culture handed down their interim report on Friday 1 February. The Interim Report is the next step in the process of examining the workplace culture of ACT Health, Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital.

In speaking with colleagues since then, responses to the Interim Report have fallen into two broad categories - either it shows that some progress is being made this time or, there's not that much in it and the usual suspects have got away with it again. I have to say, I fall somewhere in the middle – I'm encouraged by the interaction I've had with the Review Panel and the contents of the Interim Report but am troubled by how we make sure that cultural change actually occurs.

The Interim Report can be accessed here:

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-02/19036%20ACT%20Health%20-%20Interim%20Report-FINAL-V3.pdf>

### **Complaints**

The Review Panel have done a good job identifying the underlying issues, from bullying not being addressed to inefficient processes and complaints management, non-supportive leadership and inappropriate recruitment. It's heartening to see these issues identified and the Interim Report includes an analysis of the types of complaints contained in both individual submissions and those from organisations. While they broadly align, there is some difference in priorities between individuals and organisations.

Many of these issues were also identified in the AMA (ACT) submission to the Review Panel.

### **Disengagement by doctors**

One of the more disturbing, but unsurprising findings in the Interim Report was that relatively few medical practitioners engaged with the Review and that this was symptomatic of a general disengagement from the management of the hospitals and health services. Having seen and heard of some the symptoms of a disengaged medical workforce, including strained relationships with management, this comes as little surprise. It also comes as little surprise that the disengagement is strongest amongst senior doctors – both VMOs and staff.

In making these findings, the Review Panel were careful to distinguish between disengagement at a 'non-clinical' level and the continuing high-quality care and good clinical outcomes achieved by the ACT's public hospitals.

While the Review Panel identified the cost of this disengagement as the health system not benefitting from the knowledge and input of individual clinicians, I have also seen many of our medical colleagues simply choosing to resign and go elsewhere when confronted by consistently poor workplace practices or inappropriate behaviours. I'm sure there may well also be doctors who have declined to come to Canberra because they have heard of these matters.

Whatever the causes, it's well-past time to address these issues in a collaborative and effective way.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations include a range of actions that deal with clinical engagement, cultural change, better integration with the university and non-government sectors, opportunities for junior staff to broaden their experience, training leaders and preparing the next generation of those leaders, better human resource practices including in recruitment and, crucially, implementation of the recommendations.

### **Feedback on the Interim Report**

The Review Panel is now due to submit their final report by the **end of February** – this is a month earlier than initially proposed. AMA (ACT) representatives met with Review Panel earlier this week and gave some initial feedback but I would appreciate any feedback that you – our members – have on the Interim Report. You can make that feedback direct to the Review Panel ([WorkplaceCultureReview@act.gov.au](mailto:WorkplaceCultureReview@act.gov.au)) or via the AMA (ACT) ([execofficer@ama-act.com.au](mailto:execofficer@ama-act.com.au) or on 02 6270 5410) or feel free to contact me via the AMA (ACT) office.

If you prefer, any feedback made via the AMA (ACT) can be de-identified when provided to the Review Panel.

Best wishes

**Dr Antonio Di Dio**  
**President, AMA (ACT)**