

15 November 2016

Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Secretary
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Radcliffe

I am writing following Senator Stirling Griff's request that Universities Australia (UA) provide a submission to the Committee's inquiry into the medical complaints process in Australia. UA would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the issues that have been raised in other submissions and the public hearing.

UA is the peak body representing Australia's 39 comprehensive universities. Our primary activity is public and political advocacy on behalf of our members. Where appropriate, we also work with our members to coordinate a whole-of-sector approach to key issues.

In our representative role, we are currently working with our members on a campaign, *Respect. Now. Always.*, to address sexual assault and harassment on campus.

The campaign aims to raise awareness of sexual assault and sexual harassment and lift the visibility of support services for students; obtain data to guide further improvement in university policies and services; and assist universities in sharing global best practice resources across the sector.

As the peak body, UA assists in building knowledge and capacity across the sector. Each university has its own individual policies and procedures to establish clinical placements for their students and to support students while they are on placement.

UA and our member universities want every student who undertakes a clinical placement to have a safe and educationally enriching experience. UA will communicate with our members to ensure they are aware of the matters raised during this inquiry.

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UA also notes the letter from Nicholas Glasgow, President Medical Deans Australia and New Zealand, to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 4 November this year. I reproduce the letter below for the Committee's information:

Medical deans work to eradicate bullying of students

All medical students deserve to learn medicine free from bullying and discrimination (Letters, November 2). Medical schools want to develop the next generation of doctors through teaching and learning in a respectful environment. Individual universities have policies on bullying and harassment, which also apply to medical schools, and schools are required to meet the Australian Medical Council accreditation standards.

Medical students spend a significant part of their degree undertaking clinical training in hospitals and health services. Medical schools work with colleges and health services to support a clinical training workplace free from unacceptable behaviour. Medical deans recently signed the "Statement of Agreed Principles on a Respectful Culture in Medicine" committing signatories to eradicate bullying and harassment.

Students also need to know what to do if they experience bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. Clear and robust reporting processes are essential. Medical school programmes provide formal presentations and information to students. Student support staff also assist students and direct them to the correct people and complaints processes. There is always more we can do and medical deans will continue to work with AMSA (Australian Medical Students' Association) in this important area.

Studying to become a doctor is a rigorous and tough course. Medical schools take seriously our role to produce safe and competent interns. However, the teaching and practice of medicine should always occur within a safe environment for all those involved.

I hope this information is of assistance to the Committee in their deliberation of these very serious matters. Please feel welcome to contact me directly should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Belinda Robinson
CHIEF EXECUTIVE