

18.06.2024

Dear AHPRA Review Committee,

As a social worker, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this important matter of the proposed initiative to grant specialist recognition to overseas-trained doctors from competent nations within 6 months is a commendable step towards addressing critical workforce shortages.

This would include in areas like general practice, anaesthetics, obstetrics, and psychiatry. This will undoubtedly improve access to specialized care for Australians and reduce wait times, which is crucial for ensuring the well-being of individuals and communities.

However, I would like to draw your attention to a cohort of Australian-based international medical graduates (SIMGs) who have been an integral part of our healthcare system for an extended period, ranging from 5 to over 20 years. These doctors had their overseas specialist qualifications previously validated as comparable by the specialist colleges but were unable to complete the fellowship requirements due to various reasons, some of which may no longer be relevant.

Having practiced consistently in Australia for years, these SIMGs possess a deep understanding of our healthcare system, cultural competence, and familiarity with local referral pathways and support services. Granting them specialist recognition through an expedited pathway would not only acknowledge their service but would also enhance the efficiency and coordination of patient care, which is crucial for providing holistic and comprehensive support to individuals and families.

Furthermore, many of these SIMGs have undergone additional upskilling training funded by Australian taxpayers. It would be prudent to leverage this investment by granting them specialist recognition, allowing them to contribute to our healthcare system to their full potential.

I strongly encourage AHPRA to include this cohort of long-serving Australian SIMGs in any proposed expedited pathway to specialist recognition. Their years of experience and commitment to our healthcare system make them valuable assets deserving of this opportunity. Thank you for your consideration on this topic.

Kind Regards



Elizabeth Burns

