

**INQUIRY INTO THE PERFORMANCE OF AHPRA
Legal and Social Issues Committee
Legislative Council
Melbourne**

SUBMISSION:

My interest in your inquiry is regarding “the ability of the National Scheme to protect the Victorian public” in this case via the Medical Board of Australia.

Does this relate to the ability to adequately control and regulate the health, qualifications, and subsequent registration of medical practitioners, or does it relate to the protection of the Victorian public when they have suffered damage at the hands of doctors and they make the appropriate complaint through AHPRA.

As a member of the public, I cannot know about the details of the first mentioned but having suffered at the hands of the previous Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, I have reason to question the formation and performance of AHPRA.

The Medical Board of Australia, and the MPBV before that, have their first allegiance to their profession and protection of their integrity. The dilemma is that the public can only complain to the same organisation when they have suffered damage. An organisation to give an impartial investigation would need the assistance of medical professionals so in the past the only direction for complaints has been back to the medical registration board itself.

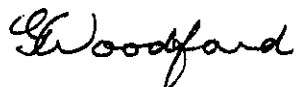
At one time I attended a public hearing of a medical complaint conducted by MPBV. It was like a court room with the doctor represented by a well-known QC who specialised in medical matters. At one point the few members of the public attending were ushered out so the hearing could be held in camera. In the hearing room at the offices of MPBV the panel representing the Board was chaired by the president. I wondered about this whole situation. Were these people doctors or experts in the conduct of lookalike court procedure. Obviously they were not both.

A previous Victorian government review of medical registration boards highlighted many responses from the public and for every person who wrote, or attended a workshop, there would be many others who were silent or knew nothing of the review anyway.

In my opinion the recognition of complaints and procedures to investigate them has never been acceptable during the 38 years I have followed this situation and any knowledge I have now does not indicate an improvement particularly as some of the same personnel are involved.

For example, my experience is that years ago my baby son and I were refused knowledge of my husband's/his father's autopsy report. Twenty years later when I could afford the legal fees I obtained the autopsy report which only produced more doubts. People in positions of trust who could have helped us then, and in later times, did not, and so "the caring profession" and others did not really care what happened to us. The more questions I asked the more defensive and nasty they became. Recently I tried to obtain assurance that these days it is compulsory for next of kin to be given autopsy information, but no-one knew, or seemed to care to find out, or return my phone calls.

"Protection of the public" is not a throwaway line or a vague responsibility.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gwen Woodford".

(Mrs) Gwen Woodford