Inquiry into Public Hospital Performance Data

Terms of Reference:

To inquire into and report on the capacity of hospitals to meet demand, standards and quality of care, resourcing and access levels, and the accuracy and completeness of performance data for Victorian public hospitals.

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Summary

- AMRANZ provides a focal point for organisations whose business is the recruitment of medical practitioners into Australia and New Zealand.

- AMRANZ medical recruitment organisations are owned and operated by ethically responsible professionals.

- AMRANZ members provide an excellent recruitment service to Australian and New Zealand health service providers resulting in optimal medical staffing levels and improved delivery of health care to all Australians and New Zealanders.

- AMRANZ provides on-line Education Modules to members to ensure high level recruitment services are provided.

- Several AMRANZ members have obtained certification in the RCSA Service Delivery Standard. The Service Delivery Standard sets a benchmark for the highest quality service and operational efficiency in the recruitment industry.

- Many AMRANZ members are Accredited Recruitment Professionals by the RCSA. This further demonstrates the highest possible commitment to service quality and professional standards with the industry sector.

- The utilisation of a medical recruitment organisation gives Victorian public hospitals another avenue for providing safer working arrangements for doctors and compliance to the State Award; in particular the Safe Hours Guidelines set by the Australian Medical Association.

- Casual doctors (Locums) provide an essential service to Victorian public hospitals in the event of absenteeism or unforeseen roster vacancies.

- International Medical Graduates work in often hard to fill permanent positions at standard State Award rates of pay.

- Substantial cost savings are afforded to the Victorian Government and to the entire network of public hospital networks when you take into account advertising costs for positions, human resources administrative time and the development of a Safe Hours Compliant Software Package.

- The provision of medical recruitment should be of the highest standard to minimise the risk of potential medico-legal action placed on Government and doctors created by adverse medical events and unsafe work practices.
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Submission from the
Association of Medical Recruitment Australia and New Zealand

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to provide the Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration with our views on the capacity of hospitals to meet demand, standards and quality of care, resourcing and access levels, and the accuracy and completeness of performance data for Victorian public hospitals.

Our submission is focused on the role of private medical recruitment services for the provision of permanent doctors (International Medical Graduates and Australian Graduates) and locum doctors (casual medical officers) as we see this as an important area in the provision of health care in the Victorian Public Hospital System. The Victorian public expect immediate and high-level care, 24 hours a day; 365 days a year from public hospitals and medical recruiters play an important role in maintaining this level of care.

About AMRANZ

The Association of Medical Recruitment Australia and New Zealand (AMRANZ) was established in 2005 as a special interest group under the auspices of the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA). AMRANZ provides a focal point for companies whose business is the recruitment of doctors into Australia and New Zealand.
The Recruitment and Consulting Services Association (RCSA) is the peak body for the recruitment industry. It was set up to represent and service the interests of its members for the increased profile and professionalism of the industry.

All AMRANZ Members abide by the RCSA Code for Professional Practice and Disciplinary and Dispute Resolution Procedure as well as the Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Healthcare Workers.

**RCSA Service Delivery Accredited Medical Recruiters**

An increasing number of our members are undergoing the process to obtain certification in the RCSA Service Delivery Standard. The RCSA Service Delivery Standard sets a benchmark for the highest quality service and operational efficiency in the recruitment industry.

The Service Delivery Standard is built on internationally recognised management standards and developed to suit the particular requirements of the recruitment industry.

In many respects the Standard is similar to the ISO Quality Standards, but a significant difference is that it focuses on customer service outcomes as the primary driver of business direction and operations design. Key outcomes are operational efficiencies and stronger customer loyalty, and underpinning it are the principles of the RCSA Code for Professional Practice.

Any AMRANZ member displaying the RCSA Service Delivery Certification symbol demonstrates that they are leaders in medical recruitment.

AMRANZ is keen to continually improve the standards of the medical recruitment industry and has plans for the Standard to be implemented as a prerequisite for membership with AMRANZ in the future.

**AMRANZ council member’s backgrounds**

**Ron Crause**
- Managing Director Qantum Recruitment
- Bachelor of Science (Psych/Physiology)
- Grad Dip in Nutrition and Dietetics
- AMRANZ President

**Corrine Taylor**
- Managing Director International Medical Recruitment
- Bachelor of Business
- AMRANZ Vice President
- AMRANZ Profile and Political Portfolio
Pauline Moore
- International Business Development Manager Geneva Health International Ltd
- RGON
- AMRANZ Committee Member

James Flynn
- Specialist Consultant (Medical) – Chandler Macleod Group
- Bachelor of Nursing
- Master of Business Administration in progress (major study focus is on Healthcare & International Human Resource Management)
- Accredited Recruitment Professional MRCSA
- AMRANZ - National Committee Councillor
- AMRANZ - Educational & Professional development portfolio

Melissa Bennett
- Managing Director Medic Oncall
- Bachelor of Economics
- Masters in Health Administration
- Graduate Certificate in Australian Migration Law
- Accredited Recruitment Professional MRCSA
- AMRANZ National Committee Member

AMRANZ Members’ Service to the Victorian Public Health System

Across Victoria, AMRANZ members’ medical recruitment services are used for locum and permanent medical practitioner recruitment.

Locum doctors are used for replacing full time doctors who are unwell, on leave or on unplanned absenteeism.

Permanent recruitment services are utilised for vacant long term positions. These doctors are recruited from Australia or from countries with comparable health systems and are employed under the MECA (Victorian State Award).

AMRANZ members provide a cost effective solution for the provision of medical recruitment for short term and permanent vacancies. Establishing individual hospital banks, operated by individual administrative officers does not have the same scale of economies as using centralised recruitment services. AMRANZ members’ have custom designed roster software packages that specifically match doctors to hospitals’ specialty preferences, whilst ensuring that doctors’ work hours do not breach the AMA Safe Hours Code.
By utilising an AMRANZ members’ medical recruitment service, health service providers can optimise medical staffing levels and thereby maintain the expected service delivery, especially in busy emergency departments who may otherwise be required to go on bypass.

On a day to day basis AMRANZ members’ are responsible in some way to contributing to patient welfare in the Victorian Public Hospital System by ensuring optimal staffing levels. In addition AMRANZ member’s services ensure that regular medical staff are well rested and can perform at their best because they are not burdened by the requirements of excessive overtime requirements.

Resourcing and Access Levels

AMRANZ members’ ability to recruit doctors for locum or permanent positions in metropolitan and country areas across Victoria maintains optimal staffing levels across Victoria thereby;

- Decreasing the medico legal risk faced by Public Hospitals and Government should doctors’ workloads be deemed unsafe to patients
- Decreasing emergency bypass occurrences
- Decreasing patient waiting times
- Improving patient care
- Improving staff morale
- Ensuring health services are available to all Victorians in metropolitan and country areas

Private businesses and Government departments utilise recruitment companies in the knowledge that human resource costs are markedly reduced. By utilising an AMRANZ member medical recruitment company, Victorian Public Hospitals can save time and money, especially when advertising and overseas travel costs to recruitment expos are taken into account.

There is value for money for Victorian public hospitals to utilise AMRANZ members to recruit medical professionals. The fees paid by a hospital to a recruitment organisation far out ways the extra time and effort that many public hospitals currently employ such as expensive and non-targeted advertising, limiting applicant pool, non-user friendly websites, reviewing large numbers of resumes that are not relevant, and not being able to provide a personalised recruitment service. AMRANZ member agencies have extensive experience in medical recruitment which is their core business, have streamlined services for accessing high quality Candidates; supporting and maintaining suitable Candidates, short listing appropriate Candidates for specific roles; providing a personalised service; and providing specific information and support to navigate the complicated processes for International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to secure employment in Victoria.

In the Victorian health industry where patients’ lives and their care are of the highest importance, the ability to maintain optimal medical staffing levels is
imperative. AMRANZ members assist the Victorian Government and individual public hospitals in achieving this.

**Capacity to Meet Demand**

Many young doctors take a year off from full time medical training to travel and or work in other public hospitals. In the past many of these doctors were forced to work overseas. AMRANZ members’ provide a resource for Victorian doctors to access casual and permanent work in their own State, thereby keeping Victorian based doctors in the Victorian Public Health Care System.

Many international medical graduates recruited for positions in Victoria take up hard to fill positions in country areas. Some of these doctors are sponsored for four years and settle in country areas with many becoming permanent Australian residents.

In the area of locum recruitment, it is our experience that the majority of young doctors in Victoria will only take time out from their medical career training for periods up to twelve months. This may be for a variety of reasons; travel, work experience in other specialities and or hospitals and family reasons. Unlike the nursing industry, doctors must progress through accredited training programs to advance their careers. As such locum work is self limiting and provides an opportunity for doctors to experience other fields of medicine prior to making a decision on their careers.

Locum positions provide Victorian trained doctors with the opportunity to work in country areas providing health services to rural and indigenous populations. It is interesting to note that many doctors who have experienced these opportunities return to work in a full time capacity in these areas after their training is completed.

Another untapped service that AMRANZ members could provide in the future is assistance with State Disaster Planning. As highlighted by the recent bushfire tragedy in Victoria, a coordinated and well developed plan would ensure that doctors could assist where the demand may be greatest.

**Standards and Quality of Care**

All AMRANZ members’ closely scrutinise their local and overseas trained doctors for suitability and experience before any placement. All documentation from the doctors and referees are verified. AMRANZ members inform Candidates to submit their documents to the ECFMG International Credentialing Service (EICS). The ECFMG sends the submitted documentation to the applicant’s original college for verification and the results are subsequently supplied to all the State Medical Boards in Australia. The documents are sent electronically, so if a problem appears, the Australian authorities are notified immediately.
AMRANZ credentialing processes are modelled on Australian Health System processes and indeed exceed this benchmark. Through our strict credentialing processes AMRANZ members' contribute to a well qualified and sustainable health workforce in Victoria.

AMRANZ maintains a close working relationship with the Medical Practitioners Boards of Victoria, The Department of Human Services, the Australian Medical Council and Department of Immigration and Citizenship. This ensures that members are kept abreast of the latest developments in the medical recruitment industry in Victoria. We actively encourage collaboration and open communication with Government to guarantee a better health care system for all Victorians.

All AMRANZ members observe a high standard of ethics, probity and professional conduct in all their dealings. Our ethical behaviour is not simply a matter of complying with legal requirements; it also extends to honesty, equity, integrity and social responsibility in all our dealings.

**Resourcing**

AMRANZ members provide health services across Victoria with a cost effective medical recruitment service. Our recruitment solutions for short term and permanent placements provide substantial savings to Victorian Public Hospitals in terms of decreased emergency bypass periods, reduced patient in stay, reduced hospital administrative costs; eg reduced advertising costs for permanent and short term positions and more efficient time management for health service administrative managers.

Indeed by utilising a reliable, effective and ethically responsible company such as an AMRANZ member medical recruitment service, the Victorian Government mitigates its risk of medico-legal litigation created by unsafe rostering and the potential of an adverse event occurring due to fatigue or increased workload.

Many AMRANZ members’ have developed rostering applications that abide by Safe Hours. These rostering applications ensure compliance to the AMA Safe Hours Code.

Locum doctors are not employed pursuant to State Awards. However, to ensure that there is not an escalation in costs to Government, most AMRANZ members have linked casual rates to the State Award and rates of pay for locum doctors are approximately equivalent to State Award overtime rates. It is AMRANZ members’ intention to provide a casual medical workforce that is both sustainable and affordable to Government and Victorian Public Hospitals.

For example, locum rates afforded to doctors in Victoria are equivalent to a 5-10% loading on standard award overtime rates as per the State Award. This loading takes into account that the locum doctor does not receive sick or annual leave entitlements as with any casual type of employment.
Affordable rates of pay for Victorian locum doctors will mean sustainability into the future. AMRANZ members are aware of our financial responsibility and respect for the public purse and believe these rates are in line with other industry standards.

Utilising a locum medical officer is also cost effective when compared to employing existing hospital staff for additional hours when taking into account overtime, on call and recall rates.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

AMRANZ recommends that the Victorian Public Health System work closely with AMRANZ member organisations to utilise a streamlined processes for the recruitment of medical practitioners. This will increase access by Victorian Public Hospitals to high quality Candidates for medical vacancies throughout Victoria.

AMRANZ members specialise in supplying essential medical staff to health service providers across Victoria, thereby supporting health services to be maintained throughout the Victorian Public Hospital system.

The Victorian health system relies on a mix of full time and locum doctors to provide an appropriate level of health care to all Victorians. This includes International Medical Graduates as well as Australian Graduates.

AMRANZ members are the reputable leaders among the medical recruitment industry and they have strict guidelines for credentialing and tracking safe hours of doctors.

Medical recruitment services are important in maintaining a high standard of patient care in the Victorian Public Hospital system, without being cost prohibitive.

NSW Health’s recent introduction of uniform standards and procedures for organisations supplying Locum medical staff to the public hospital system included requirements such as membership of AMRANZ and evidence of independent 3rd party audits such as ISO or RSCA Service Delivery Accreditation. Several AMRANZ members have also been included on NSW Health's Panel of approved Overseas Recruiting Agents (PORA). Our members' involvement in panels such as these further demonstrates our comment to the Australian public and working in partnership with governments to manage costs and the quality of services provided.

Given our members' high level of knowledge and expertise in the area of locum and international medical recruitment we would be pleased to give evidence at a Public Hearing.
AMRANZ recommends that medical recruitment companies be credentialed prior to providing their services to the Victorian Public Health System. This would be done through the RCSA (Recruitment and Consulting Services Association) and AMRANZ (Association of Medical Recruitment Australia and New Zealand). This will ensure excellent standards of medical recruitment and minimise the risk of adverse medical events in the Victorian Public Health System.

In addition, we recommend that the medical recruitment industry hold regular and formal meetings with the Department of Human Services, the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria and major Public Hospitals to establish open communication and transfer of knowledge in this very important area of Victorian public health.

We would also welcome the opportunity to be involved in any State Disaster planning in terms of having immediate access to thousands of registered doctors who could be deployed to areas of need in the event of a human or natural disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission to the Inquiry into Public Hospital Performance Data. We look forward to an improved Public Hospital system in Victoria and we would be delighted to provide further information to the Standing Committee if required.

Kind Regards

Melissa Bennett
On behalf of the Association of Medical Recruitment Australia and New Zealand (AMRANZ)