FPM
Faculty of Pain Medicine
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Faculty of Pain Medicine
Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

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Mr Justin Untersteiner
CEO, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra)

Via email: justin.untersteiner@ahpra.gov.au

Dr Susan O'Dwyer
Chair, Medical Board of Australia

Via email: susan.odwyer@ahpra.gov.au

Dear Mr Untersteiner and Dr O'Dwyer,

Thank you again for your participation in the recent CPMC meeting. We appreciated the opportunity to discuss our shared commitment to protecting the public and supporting informed healthcare decision-making.

Recent media reporting arising from the Four Corners investigation into medicinal cannabis prescribing has highlighted references to a "pain specialist" and broader concerns with public understanding of pain medicine qualifications and the use of pain medicine-related titles and descriptors. While FPM is not seeking information about any individual practitioner or regulatory matter, the reporting has reinforced concerns about potential confusion between:

- registered Specialist Pain Medicine Physicians recognised under the National Law, and
- medical practitioners who use pain medicine-related descriptors or represent expertise in pain management, but who are not recognised specialists in Pain Medicine.

We are increasingly aware that patients appear unaware of the differences in training pathways, specialist recognition and regulatory status, and may assume that similarly described qualifications represent equivalent expertise. The recent reporting has raised questions about whether consumers can readily identify when a practitioner is a registered Specialist Pain Medicine Physician and whether current terminology and descriptors used within the broader pain management sector may contribute to misunderstanding.

We would therefore be interested to understand whether Ahpra and the Medical Board are:

- Aware of concerns regarding the use of pain medicine-related titles, descriptors or representations of expertise, arising from this Four Corners investigation or in general.
- Considering any further regulatory guidance, consumer education initiatives or communications in this area.

Our interest is solely in supporting informed consumer choice and ensuring patients can clearly understand practitioners' qualifications, training and recognised specialist status when making decisions about their care.

We would welcome the opportunity for a discussion with Ahpra and the Medical Board to better understand your perspectives and explore whether there are opportunities for FPM to support public education and transparency in this area.

Yours sincerely



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