

March 31, 2026

Associate Professor Simon Stafrace
Chair
New Fellowship Training Taskforce
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
309 La Trobe St
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Dear Associate Professor Stafrace,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists' (RANZCP) development of a new fellowship program. We commend your college's willingness to search broadly for innovative approaches, trends and technologies and appreciate the invitation for non-members to contribute to your current consultation.

The Faculty of Pain Medicine (FPM) is an internationally renowned professional medical body, established in response to the high prevalence and significant impact of chronic pain in our communities. It was constituted in 1998 with memoranda of understanding between your college - the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA), the Royal Australian College of Physicians (RACP), the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, Royal Australasian College of Physicians (AFRM RACP).

FPM is accredited by the Australian Medical Council and the Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ) for the training and assessment of specialist pain medicine physicians and for their continuing professional development. Our vision is to reduce the burden of pain on society through education, advocacy, training and research. Fellows of FPM are recognised as specialists in Australia, and as having a distinct vocational scope of practice by the MCNZ. We currently have 24 dual fellows of RANZCP and FPM and one current trainee holding FRANZCP.

The symbiotic relationship between pain and mental illness is both significant and well documented. People living with chronic pain are 2.5 times more likely to experience mental health problems compared to those without chronic pain ⁽¹⁾. Mental health disorders including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder frequently affect those living with chronic pain and are also associated with increased rates of suicide ⁽²⁾. Childhood adversity (physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect) increase the risk of and severity of pain in adulthood ⁽³⁾ as does interpersonal trauma in women ⁽⁴⁾.

In recent years, FPM has led two Australian Government-funded initiatives to strengthen pain management education across the health workforce. The *National Strategy for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education* was developed with broad stakeholder input during 2020–2022 and outlines a clear strategic roadmap to guide the upskilling of the Australian health workforce in

contemporary, evidence-based pain care with the aim of improving the health outcomes of individuals living with pain.

As part of this strategy, the *Australian Standards for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education* (“the standards”) were developed and recently approved by the Australian Federal Government. The standards provide a nationally consistent framework to guide pain management education across all health disciplines and all levels of education. While voluntary at this stage, the standards are designed to sit above all relevant curricula, content and teaching approaches.

The Australian Standards for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education focus on six key themes:

- Standard 1: Person-centred approach to care
- Standard 2: Best practice education
- Standard 3: Evidence-based content
- Standard 4: Reflective practice
- Standard 5: Communication
- Standard 6: Collaborative approach to care

As part of the broad consultation undertaken during the development of the standards, FPM convened a Pain Management Education Roundtable in July 2025 which involved representatives of the specialist medical colleges. RANZCP was represented at the Roundtable by your college’s Training Manager, Mr Ben Riethmuller and one of your fellows, Dr Dan Hubik, both of whom were positive about the then draft standards, their relevance and potential for use within the RANZCP’s fellowship program.

In this context, FPM recommends that RANZCP consider the incorporation of the Australian Standards for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education in the development and delivery of your college’s new fellowship program. This would:

- Support a consistent, evidence-based and comprehensive approach to pain management education.
- Align closely with RANZCP’s goal to create a new fellowship program that “develops compassionate, culturally safe and patient-centred psychiatrists grounded in relational, ethical and recovery-oriented care”.
- Strengthen trainee capability in managing the complex interplay between mental health and pain.
- Embed cultural safety and responsiveness, informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse perspectives.
- Reinforce reflective practice and person-centred care as core professional capabilities.
- Ensure alignment with contemporary multidisciplinary models of care and education.

The standards intersect with the model of education and training development, which involves the continuous improvement model of planning, development, implementation (delivery) and evaluation and improvement. Their adoption would help address longstanding gaps in pain-related knowledge and skills across the health workforce.

The standards are now publicly available via an online hub, accessible via the following link: <https://www.anzca.edu.au/pain-education-standards>. The online hub also contains other resources to promote an understanding of the standards and encourage their uptake. FPM would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or engage with the Taskforce as you progress this work.

FPM would also welcome further opportunities to collaborate with RANZCP to strengthen pain management education for psychiatry fellows and trainees, including opportunities to draw on the expertise of our dual fellows.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Dilip Kapur
Dean, Faculty of Pain Medicine

References:

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2. Allingham S, Blanchard M, Tardif H, Quinsey K, Bryce M, Cameron K, et al. Electronic persistent pain outcomes collaboration annual data report 2019. Australian Health Services Research Institute, University of Wollongong; 2020.
3. Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, et al. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *Am J Prev Med.* 2019;56(6):774-86.
4. Flehr A, Coles J, Dixon JB, Gibson SJ, Brilleman SL, Harris ML, et al. Epidemiology of Trauma History and Body Pain: A Retrospective Study of Community-Based Australian Women. *Pain Med.* 2021;22(9):1916-29.