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President
Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

1 October 2026

Dr Danielle McMullen
President, Australian Medical Association
AMA House, Level 1, 42 Macquarie Street,
Barton, ACT 2604

Dear Dr Danielle McMullen

Re: AMA Specialist Trainee Experience Health Check Report

We are writing on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) regarding the 2025 AMA Specialist Trainee Experience Health Check report.

ANZCA supports efforts to understand and improve the experiences of doctors in training. Listening to trainees, identifying areas for improvement, and addressing concerns are responsibilities shared by colleges, employers, governments, health services and professional associations alike. We welcome meaningful discussion about the trainee experience and remain committed to continuous improvement in specialist medical education.

However, we are disappointed by both the framing and presentation of this report.

While we recognise that trainee feedback should be heard and acted upon, the report appears to contribute to an increasingly common narrative that positions specialist medical colleges as the principal source of challenges experienced by trainees. In our view, this risks oversimplifying issues that are often systemic, multifactorial and largely beyond the direct control of colleges.

The realities of contemporary medical training are shaped by workforce shortages, service pressures, rostering demands, health system funding, workplace culture, jurisdictional requirements and the competing pressures faced by trainees and supervisors alike. Any assessment of the trainee experience should acknowledge this broader context.

We are also concerned that conclusions may be drawn from the report that extend beyond what the data can reasonably support. The public release of findings without sufficient context regarding methodology, response rates, limitations and confounding factors creates a risk that readers, policymakers and the broader community will form an incomplete view of specialist training and the role of medical colleges.

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At a time when colleges are undertaking substantial reforms in governance, training, assessment, wellbeing and support structures, reports of this nature can inadvertently undermine confidence in institutions that exist to safeguard standards of specialist training and, ultimately, patient care.

It is also important to recognise the extraordinary contribution made by specialist fellows who voluntarily teach, supervise, mentor and examine trainees. ANZCA has recently commissioned a survey of fellow volunteer activity, with results to be released shortly. Early findings indicate many hundreds of thousands of hours of pro bono contribution to specialist medical education. While colleges should always be open to scrutiny, reports that present colleges primarily as part of the problem risk overlooking the commitment of the clinicians who collectively deliver training. Colleges are, in reality, the fellows who give their time and expertise to support the next generation of specialists. When that contribution is not acknowledged, it is those volunteers who are most diminished.

Like all organisations, colleges should be open to scrutiny and feedback. Equally, there should be recognition of the significant efforts being made across the sector to respond to trainee concerns and modernise training programs.

A balanced discussion requires both perspectives.

We are particularly concerned that this report may reinforce an unhelpful "*colleges versus trainees"* narrative. Colleges and trainees are not opposing interests. We are partners in the shared endeavour of educating and supporting the next generation of specialists. Public commentary that suggests otherwise risks eroding trust at a time when collaboration is needed more than ever.

ANZCA remains committed to engaging with our trainees, listening carefully to their experiences, and acting where change is required. We would welcome future opportunities for more direct engagement between the AMA and the specialist colleges regarding methodology, interpretation of findings and the broader context in which trainee experiences occur.

We value the AMA's contribution to the profession and recognise the importance of advocacy on behalf of doctors in training. Nevertheless, we felt it important to place on record our disappointment that the report does not, in our view, provide a sufficiently balanced account of the complexities of specialist medical education or the considerable efforts being made by colleges to improve the trainee experience.

We remain committed to working constructively with the AMA in pursuit of our shared goal: ensuring that trainees are supported to thrive and that the Australian community continues to benefit from high-quality specialist medical care.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tanya Selak
President, ANZCA

Lance Emerson
Chief Executive Officer, ANZCA