



ANZCA
FPM

President and CEO

Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

26 February 2025

Mr Blair Comley PSM
Secretary
Department of Health and Aged Care

Via email blair.comley@health.gov.au

Dear Mr Comley

Implementation of expedited Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) pathway for specialist anaesthetists

As you are aware, in late December 2024 the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) announced that specialist anaesthetists from the United Kingdom and Ireland, could apply to the expedited specialist pathway for SIMG recognition in Australia.

On 7 October 2024 we wrote to you highlighting our concerns about the readiness of the expedited pathway, our lack of involvement in the design, failure to use our expertise and potential risks to patient safety. ANZCA, and other medical colleges, continue to hold concerns about the pathway that is now operational, and now our priority is to ensure foreseeable implementation and operational risks are minimised and that safety concerns are considered and managed.

We think there are five practical solutions for the MBA and governments to consider.

1. Understanding the available SIMG pathways

With the implementation of the expedited pathway we understand there has been confusion, including for employers, on the options available to overseas specialist anaesthetists considering working in Australia. The possible specialist anaesthetist pathways include:

- ANZCA standard SIMG pathway and assessment process.
Area of need (AoN) pathway.
MBA expedited specialist pathway.
Supplementary pathway to ANZCA fellowship (the ANZCA process leading to fellowship if the MBA expedited pathway is undertaken).

Further clarification of these pathways is included in the attachment to this letter, which we will send to Heads of Anaesthesia Departments in Australian hospitals. You may also like to communicate these pathways to your hospital employers.

2. Importance of Fellowship

The college, and the medical community, recognise the importance of fellowship in providing high-quality and safe patient care. ANZCA fellowship provides a meaningful and ongoing supportive community of practice as well as opportunities for supervision and training roles.

As the MBA expedited pathway will not lead to fellowship of ANZCA (i.e. FANZCA), ANZCA has developed a pathway to ANZCA fellowship that can be undertaken by MBA

expedited specialist pathway applicants if they choose. This can run concurrently with the expedited pathway, and if successful will lead to specialist medical registration and ANZCA fellowship. The concurrent pathway to ANZCA fellowship comprises the following requirements:

Completion of all MBA expedited specialist pathway requirements, AND

Undertaking six months full-time equivalent clinical practice assessment (including the supervised practice required for the MBA expedited specialist pathway), AND

- Successfully completing the SIMG performance assessment, AND
- Participating in the ANZCA Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program.

From our twenty-year experience of supporting and assessing SIMGs, we do not believe these requirements will add significant burden or delay to the SIMG expedited pathway. ANZCA asks Australian governments to encourage and promote the value of fellowship to both the expedited SIMGs and the broader Australian community.

Further information on this parallel pathway is located on our website, as well as the benefits of ANZCA fellowship.

3. Importance of ANZCA as CPD Home

The importance of a CPD Home that is closely aligned to the relevant medical college is crucial. The MBA requires expedited SIMGs to have a CPD Home (regardless of fellowship intentions), conduct 50 hours of CPD each calendar year, and to choose a specialist medical college or non-college as their CPD Home.

ANZCA asks Australian governments to encourage and promote ANZCA as the CPD Home for anaesthesia specialists undertaking this pathway, as the CPD Home that sets the standard for CPD for anaesthetists.

This would align with the approach taken by the Medical Council of New Zealand who mandate the relevant medical college to be the associated CPD Home.

4. Supervisors are FANZCAs

We recommend that Australian governments encourage supervisors of doctors on the expedited pathway to be a fellow of their relevant college.

Understanding the unique cultural and health system environment of Australia is much more than a qualification assessment – specific training and support from suitable supervisors is required to integrate smoothly into hospital operations, particularly in regional and rural Australia.

There is still considerable uncertainty about the role, qualifications, obligations and liability of expedited SIMG supervisors under the MBA pathway. We recommend that these supervisors must be Fellows of ANZCA (i.e. FANZCA qualified).

5. Review / evaluation of the pathway

As with any government initiative, we suggest that all Australian governments should consider the expedited pathway as a “pilot” and subject to a review and evaluation with suitable metrics for performance assessment. Medical colleges should be involved in this as experts in this area. For example, is the MBA expedited pathway operating as intended? Is the expedited pathway faster than college pathways for substantially comparable SIMGs? Are expedited SIMGs placed and retained in areas of most need? Are there any adverse unintended consequences?

Our priority is to work with Australian governments to ensure high-quality and safe anaesthesia patient care continues for the Australian community, including rural and regional Australia. As always, we are happy to discuss if you have any queries or require further information via ceo@anzca.edu.au.

Yours sincerely



Professor Dave Story
President



Mr Nigel Fidgeon
Chief Executive Officer

Att: Specialist anaesthetist pathway options available to overseas specialist anaesthetists considering working in Australia

Attachment: Specialist anaesthetist pathway options available to overseas specialist anaesthetists considering working in Australia

ANZCA standard Specialist International Medical Graduate (SIMG) pathway and assessment process

The standard SIMG assessment pathway where SIMGs are assessed for comparability to an Australian trained specialist commencing practice, taking into consideration the SIMG's intended scope of practice as well as their previous training and assessment, recent specialist practice, experience and continuing professional development (CPD). This pathway is not a specialist training program. Successful completion of the SIMG pathway will enable applicants to practise as an unsupervised specialist anaesthetist and to apply for fellowship of ANZCA.

Further information on the pathway is available here:

<https://www.anzca.edu.au/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/simg-assessment-process>.

Area of need (AoN) pathway

In Australia, there is also an AoN process, which addresses medical workforce shortages in designated areas. The AoN process allows an SIMG to work for a limited period in a specific position prior to undertaking the full SIMG pathway. The AoN process alone does not lead to fellowship of ANZCA or specialist registration by the MBA. If a SIMG wishes to undertake an AoN position, they must apply for assessment in both the AoN and SIMG pathways.

Further information on the pathway is available here:

<https://www.anzca.edu.au/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/area-of-need-pathway>.

MBA expedited specialist pathway

The new expedited specialist pathway intended to be a streamlined process designed to accelerate the assessment and recognition of overseas trained specialists who demonstrate that they meet specific eligibility criteria if they hold recognised overseas specialist qualifications on the 'expedited specialist pathway: accepted qualifications list'. However, this pathway will bypass existing medical college assessment processes, with MBA to conduct paper-based assessment of SIMGs and then approving them for specialist registration in Australia. The expedited pathway does not lead to an ANZCA fellowship.

Further information on the pathway is available here:

<https://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration/International-Medical-Graduates/Expedited-specialist-pathway.aspx>.

Supplementary pathway to ANZCA fellowship

As the MBA expedited pathway will not lead to ANZCA fellowship (i.e. FANZCA), ANZCA has developed a pathway to ANZCA fellowship that can be undertaken by expedited specialist pathway applicants if they choose, to run concurrently with the expedited pathway, and if successful will lead to ANZCA fellowship. Once accepted onto the expedited specialist pathway, applicants contact the college at simg@anzca.edu.au to apply. Applicants who are not eligible for the MBA expedited specialist pathway should apply through ANZCA's standard SIMG pathway.

This pathway comprises the following requirements:

Undertaking six months full-time equivalent clinical practice assessment (inclusive of the supervised practice required for the MBA expedited specialist pathway), AND

- Evidence of completion of an Effective Management of Anaesthetic Crises (EMAC) course, AND
- Successfully completing the SIMG performance assessment , AND
- Participating in the ANZCA CPD program, AND

Completion of all MBA expedited specialist pathway requirements.

Further information on the pathway is available here:

<https://www.anzca.edu.au/education-and-training/specialist-international-medical-graduates/medical-board-of-australia-expedited-specialist-pathway>.