



ANZCA

FPM

President and CEO

Australian and New Zealand
College of Anaesthetists

20 January 2025

Mr Blair Comley PSM

Secretary

Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care

Via email blair.comley@health.gov.au

Dear Blair

Meeting (18 December 2024) follow-up – Expedited Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) pathway for specialist Anaesthetists

Thank you for your, Ms Eliza Strapp and Dr Susan Wearne's time to meet with us on 18 December 2024 to discuss our concerns and potential solutions relating to the expedited SIMG pathway for specialist anaesthetists. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss a collaborative way forward to ensure all foreseeable implementation and operational risks and safety concerns are considered and incorporated to the extent possible.

As discussed with you in the meeting (and outlined in our original letter to you on 7 October 2024), ANZCA holds concerns about the readiness of the pathway, our lack of involvement in the design and utilisation of our expertise, insufficient communication on the process and status, and the potential risks to patient safety from a non-anaesthetist paper-based assessment. Notwithstanding this, we understand the intent is to have a level of uniformity across medical colleges and a method for increased access to medical specialists. We believe there are some practical solutions that should be navigated along with operating the pathway.

1. ANZCA involvement in assessment

We do not have any transparency of the skills and qualification of Medical Board of Australia Assessment committee members, including confirmation if every speciality will be represented. We are concerned that some specialists will be assessing applications that are not within their area of speciality.

A collaborative outcome is an ANZCA specialist is involved in the assessment of anaesthesia applications, together with Assessment committee members. It may mean a "pool" of medical college experts to be utilised for each respective application.

At a local employer/head of department level we know there is complete trust in specialists who have progressed via the robust ANZCA SIMG pathway. ANZCA involvement would provide a similar level of confidence.

2. Supervisors are FANZCAs

Supervisors of SIMGs should be a fellow of the respective college. However, clarity on the legal obligations of the supervisor is required, as traditionally this has been covered by the college which will no longer be the case.

3. Promoting importance of college fellowship and CPD Home

ANZCA is developing a pathway to ANZCA fellowship to be offered to this cohort, to run concurrently to their expedited pathway, and if successful will lead to ANZCA fellowship.

ANZCA would appreciate that jurisdictional governments encourage the importance of fellowship, plus the relevant college as the CPD Home, to ensure a level of sufficient supportive community of practice (as the Medical Council of New Zealand has stipulated for their expedited pathway).

4. Review / evaluation of the pathway

As with any government initiative, the expedited pathway should be considered a “pilot” and subject to a review and/or evaluation with suitable metrics for performance assessment. Medical colleges should be involved in this as experts in this area. For example, is the pathway operating as intended? Is it quicker? Are specialists placed and retained in areas of most need? Are there any unintended consequences or issues?

We would appreciate if you could support the implementation of these four practical solutions, to the Medical Board of Australia.

As always, we are happy to discuss if you have any queries or require further information.

Yours sincerely



Professor Dave Story
President



Ms Jan Sharrock
Acting Chief Executive Officer