



SUBMISSION TO THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Australasian Association of Nuclear Medicine Specialists (AANMS) is pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment of a Health Ombudsman.

As the peak body representing nuclear medicine specialists practising in Australia and New Zealand, the AANMS welcomes support for quality health and medical care and acknowledges that recent high profile events in Queensland have focused attention on processes designed to assure such quality.

However, the Inquiry will be aware that widespread concern has been expressed about this proposal, embodied in Queensland's Health Ombudsman Bill 2013. The AANMS has similar concerns including:

- The question of independence of any complaints mechanism under the proposed legislation;
- the assurance of fairness in any process;
- the proposition that a medical practitioner can be suspended prior to appropriate assessment of a complaint and the potential deleterious impact on a medical practitioner's reputation as a result;
- the lack of assurance that there is appropriate and relevant independent clinical advice underpinning any such process;
- the proposition that Codes of Conduct may be determined by regulation under the Minister's direction, rather than by the relevant professional bodies, which is the normal practice¹;
- the potential negative impact on medical practices and the potential to increase the cost of medical indemnity insurance, and
- the fact that such changes would put Queensland at odds with other jurisdictions.

The Queensland community deserves a complaints system that is based on unbiased, evidence-based review, and the right to expect that quality medical care will be delivered in a safe environment. The AANMS acknowledges the Minister's intentions to ensure that such an environment exists in Queensland.

However, the AANMS is concerned that the proposed Bill is an extreme reaction to past events without fully acknowledging the nature of the failures of process that led to those events. These include not recognising the source of such failures and not utilising the clinical expertise that exists in the medical specialties to identify potential problems and address such problems through proper clinical credentialing and accreditation.

¹ On this point, the AANMS does not agree with the AMA Queensland submission; the AANMS does not consider it is the appropriate role of State Medical Boards to endorse Codes of Conduct.

Promoting Quality Molecular Imaging In Medicine

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The AANMS is concerned that such problems will not be adequately addressed by the proposed legislation and that the Queensland community will not receive the level of assurance they should expect from such legislation.

These issues and others have been discussed in detail by the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) Queensland Branch in its response to the Inquiry, dated 17 June 2013; the AANMS wishes to formally support the AMA Queensland's submission.