

**Question on Notice
No. 301
Asked on 8 March 2006**

MR FINN asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON) -

QUESTION:

What is the Government doing to expedite Queensland's medical registration processes?

ANSWER:

Firstly, let me assure the Member for Yeerongpilly that the Beattie Government is committed to streamlining and expediting the current medical registration process while also maintaining the rigor of the process.

On 7 March 2006, I introduced the *Medical Practitioners Registration Amendment Bill 2006* (the Bill) for this purpose. The draft laws are designed to give the Medical Board of Queensland more flexibility to perform its registration functions promptly and to have simpler processes in place for doctors applying for registration.

It is in the best interests of patients that overseas and interstate doctors who accept jobs in Queensland public hospitals are registered and working as soon as possible. We are already working hard to recruit new doctors for our public hospitals in the face of a critical national shortage of doctors.

All doctors will still have their medical qualifications and work history thoroughly checked before they are allowed to practice in Queensland.

The relevant parts of the Bill seek to:

- broaden the qualifications for general registration to include recognition of medical qualifications not only of those certified by the Australian Medical Council but also those recognised by certain prescribed overseas registration bodies such as the United Kingdom General Medical Council. This means that Queensland will be in a position to respond quickly to changes being proposed at the national level;
- expand the Board's power of delegation to allow a board member, its executive officer or a committee including at least one board member to approve registration applications;
- require the Medical Board to report to the Minister if it fails to decide a complete registration application within 25 working days of receiving it; and
- allow short-term registration to be granted for interstate and overseas doctors providing locum services for a period of five weeks or less and waive their application and registrations fees.

I am aware that, in some circumstances, it can take months for an overseas doctor to successfully go through the registration process and start treating patients.

By streamlining the processes, we can get doctors registered quicker and on the job treating patients quicker.

The proposed amendments will allow the Medical Board to delegate power to a board member, a committee containing at least one member of the board or its chief executive, the power to approve registration applications.

At present, the Medical Board meets just two days a month to consider registration applications. The proposed changes will require the Medical Board to report to the Minister if it fails to make a decision on an application that meets the legislation requirements within 25 working days. The Medical Board will need to give reasons for the delay and outline actions it will take to avoid similar delays in the future.

There will be greater incentive for interstate or overseas doctors to perform short-term locum services in Queensland by waiving their registration and application fees.

These amendments will all help expedite medical registration processes in Queensland without watering down the rigorous screening we do to make sure our doctors are competent. They will reflect the Government's determination to rebuild and improve the health system for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

The timelines of medical registration approval will be further enhanced in November this year with implementation of new registrations and registrant management software to replace the current outdated registrations information system used by the Medical Board. This has been funded by the Government.

The Government has consulted with and listened to feedback from stakeholders regarding the current medical registration process and we believe the proposed amendments and other changes in the pipeline will achieve a significant improvement in the time it takes for doctors who accept jobs in Queensland to become registered.