

14 August 2012

Australian Medical Council  
AMC Accreditation Section  
PO Box 4810  
KINGSTON ACT 2604

### **Review of the approved accreditation standards for medical schools**

Thank you for your letter of 25 June 2012, inviting me to make a submission on the Australian Medical Council's review of the accreditation standards for medical schools (the standards).

My role as Health and Disability Commissioner is to promote and protect the rights of health and disability services consumers. I am charged with promoting awareness of consumers' rights among providers of health and disability services. Accordingly, it is my expectation that medical students, particularly those who may practice in New Zealand, will be introduced to the unique New Zealand legal landscape as it concerns patient rights, in particular the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (the Code), and the role of my Office.

The focus of my governing legislation is on the quality of care provided to health and disability services consumers. While the competence of health and disability service providers has a direct effect on the quality of care consumers receive from those providers, it is not my role to comment on the clinical requirements of practitioner core competencies.

However, I am impressed that the new Graduate Outcome Statements reflect many of the rights encompassed in the Code, such as the right to respect and the requirement to obtain fully informed consent. Similarly, I commend the inclusion of standards that require safe, high quality patient-centred care, and knowledge of fundamental legal responsibilities. Failures in those areas are recurring themes in complaints that come before my Office and, in my view, it is imperative that medical students understand their obligations in those regards before they commence practice.

I am also pleased to read in the draft "Domain 4" that graduates are expected to recognise the limits of their own expertise and involve other professionals as needed to contribute to patient care. I encourage students and junior doctors to ask questions and raise concerns to senior staff (including other professionals), and all staff to maintain a culture that both allows and encourages such interactions.

In general, I consider the draft changes to the standards to be positive. I note that staff from my Office and I already provide training on legal and ethical aspects of medical practice as relate to the functions of my Office. This is currently achieved in many ways, including by giving guest lectures at medical schools and in postgraduate

clinical programmes around New Zealand. I intend to continue engaging with the sector in this way. I consider medical students, as the doctors of the future, are important in bringing about the kind of culture change that is necessary for medical practice to become truly patient-centred.