



MEDIA RELEASE

20 June 2001

40% INCREASE IN COMPLAINTS TO MEDICAL BOARD

A 40% increase in complaints and the registration of more doctors in rural Victoria marked the year-2000, according to the annual report of the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, tabled in the Victorian Parliament yesterday.

The significant rise in complaints is the result of an increase in reporting rather than an increase in the incidence of unprofessional conduct, the report states. The Board believes this follows greater public awareness of the role of the Board, a higher public profile for the Board and increased media coverage of formal disciplinary hearings and other medical regulation issues.

Dr Joanna Flynn, Board President, said the Board remained focussed on its core function: protecting the community.

“We want to ensure that the medical profession provides the best possible care for the people of Victoria,” Dr Flynn said. She added that the Board was confident that the vast majority of Victorian doctors were competent, caring and trust-worthy.

The 2000 reporting year – which spans 1 October 1999 to 30 September 2000 – also featured:

- A steady rise in the total number of doctors registered in Victoria (from 15,981 to 16,208), reflecting the increased portability of medical registration through mutual recognition legislation (more doctors are choosing to be registered in more than one state)
- An increase in “area of need” registrants – from 65 to 109 – boosting the number of doctors able to practice in rural Victoria
- An increase in the number of doctors referred to the Board’s Health Program (from 30 new referrals in 1999 to 46 new referrals in 2000). The Board believes this increase is explained by more doctors being willing to seek assistance when their ability to practise may be impaired and higher awareness in the profession of the Board’s role in monitoring doctors whose health may be impaired
- An increase – from 104 to 123 – in the total number of doctors being monitored through the Board’s Health Program

Other significant features of the reporting year include:

- The launch of the Victorian Doctor’s Health Program – a joint AMA (Vic) and Medical Board initiative designed to ensure that all registered medical practitioners and medical students have access to a range of integrated services to improve and maintain their health and well-being
- The introduction of a vetting process in complaints to ensure the early resolution of less serious issues and the swift referral of appropriate matters to other agencies
- The development of the Board’s Sexual Misconduct Strategy to address the problem of sexual misconduct in the medical profession
- The development of a Strategic Plan for the Board

Dr Flynn said during the year the Board continued to expand its external focus.

“We continue to seek new ways of working with both the profession and the community to identify, understand and address issues of concern and to promote and support high standards of practice,” she said.

Further Information: Nicole Newton: 0407 998 611

