

Dear members

I wanted to give you an update on where we are up to with our campaign for a Board of Inquiry to examine workplace culture and bullying in the ACT healthcare system.

On Sunday we held a joint media conference with ASMOF, supported by the VMOA, again calling for the establishment of a Board of Inquiry. We made this call to demonstrate that organised medicine stood together for the good of the healthcare system in the ACT.

My thanks to our colleagues at ASMOF and the VMOA for their support.

Protections for Staff

For a Board of Inquiry to undertake its work effectively, it must be set up so that community members and staff can come and tell their stories in a protected environment and without fear of reprisal. The Inquiries Act, which contains the provisions dealing with Boards of Inquiry, sets out a comprehensive suite of protections for submitters, witnesses and other participants in an inquiry's proceedings.

We believe these are the standards that should apply in this instance.

Public accountability for Health Executives

Equally important, it is vital that the Board of Inquiry holds public hearings so that ACT Health, Calvary Public Hospital, and other organisations that receive large amounts of taxpayer dollars are held to account in full view of the ACT community. How can our community be satisfied that we know what's been going on in the administration of health care in the ACT, unless healthcare bosses are questioned in public by an independent Board of Inquiry, and challenged about their decisions, policies, procedures, and actions?

Our message to the Health Minister has been consistent – any Inquiry to look in to these matters must have access to the health system's policies, administrative records and information so that it can effectively question ACT Health and Calvary Public Hospital executives.

To put it another way, the recent Royal Commissions, into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and into the Banks, held public and private hearings. But consider what would have happened if all their hearings had been held in private and the leaders of the various child welfare agencies, churches and schools or the executives of banks and insurance companies had never been questioned in public?

Clearly, they would have been much less effective in bringing about change and, importantly, the banks, child welfare agencies and others would never have been held to public account. That's why our local health chiefs needed to be questioned in public too.

Minister's Proposed Review

It's difficult to give you definitive information on the Minister's proposal as we have seen no further detail since she announced the fact of the review on Monday of last week. We have provided our draft terms of reference to the Minister on the day she announced her review but have had limited feedback since then.

The Minister said today that a further statement would be made in the very near future – including her draft terms of reference - and we await the next development.

Appreciation

Many, many thanks to those of you who have been in contact since we made the initial call for a Board of Inquiry. It's been amazing to have read and considered the many texts, emails and phone calls that have come through.

The AMA (ACT) Board took, what was not an easy step to take, in calling for this inquiry, but it has truly struck a chord.

My thanks for your support.

Best wishes

Dr Antonio Di Dio
AMA (ACT) President

Submitting Information to AMA (ACT)

If you have experienced episodes or poor workplace culture at either ACT Health or Calvary Public Hospital and wish to make a confidential submission to AMA (ACT) you can make a confidential call to our CEO Peter Somerville, on 02 6270 5410, 0417 047 764 or email execofficer@ama-act.com.au or by email to me at president@ama-act.com.au