
COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY (NO. 1) OF 2005
MEDICAL BOARD OF QUEENSLAND

Statement of:

Name: **Dr. Erica Mary COHN**

Address: c/- Medical Board of Queensland, Level 19, 160 Mary Street,
Brisbane, Queensland.

Telephone No.:
(wk) 3379 1831

Telephone No: (Mobile)

Qualifications: MB BS (Qld) M Fam Med (Monash)

Employment Background: General Practitioner since 1971
Annexed hereto and marked "**EMC-1**" is a copy of my Curriculum Vitae.

Availability: I am available to give evidence in this matter on Friday, 27 May 2005;
Friday, 3 June 2005 and Friday, 10 June 2005; or with 4 working days' notice, any other day or night as required by the Commissioner.

States as follows:

1. This statement is made without prior knowledge of any evidence or information held by the Inquiry which is potentially adverse to the Board or its members, the Executive Officer of Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards or its employees and in the expectation that any of the aforementioned will be afforded procedural fairness upon timely receipt of any notice of adverse allegation, or notification of evidence or information requiring the response of any of the aforementioned.
2. My full name is ERICA MARY COHN and I am the Chairperson of the Medical Board of Queensland (the "Board"). I am a registered medical practitioner in the State of Queensland. On 2 December 2004, I was appointed Chairperson of the current Board for a term of 4 years. Annexed hereto and marked "**EMC-2**" is a true copy of the notification of my appointment to this position as appeared in the Queensland Government Gazette No. 22 of 21 October 2004. I served as Deputy Chairperson from 11 April 2003. Prior to my appointment I was an ordinary registrant member of the Board for approximately 5 years, from about April 1998. I have been a general practitioner in Queensland for about 34


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years. I have access to the books and records of the Medical Board of Queensland and I am authorised to make this statement concerning the Board.

3. The current Board was appointed on and from 2 December 2004. It meets twice monthly, every second Tuesday. The present Board consists of the following members:

Registrant members

Dr Erica Mary Cohn MB BS (Qld) MFM

Dr Christopher John Kennedy MB BS (Adel DipObst (RACOG) FRACGP FRACMA
GradDipHealthAdmin MPH&TM (deputy chairperson)

Professor Laurence Basil Geffen BSc MB BCh MSc BA MA DPhil MRANZCP FRANZCP
FRACP MD

Dr Vaidyanathan Kalyanasundaram MB BS(Madras) MRANZCP FRANZCP

Dr Marion Margaret Sullivan MB BS (Qld) FRANZCP

Associate Professor Beverly Anne Raasch PHD FACTM MB BS (Qld)

Public members

Michael John Clare MBA GradCertMgt

Dianne Marguerite Beckey BA MSPD (AppSociology)

Lawyer

Allison Clare Langford LLB BSc GradDipEd.

Chief Health Officer

Dr Gerry FitzGerald, MB BS (Qld) FACEM FRACMA MD (Qld)

4. I was an ordinary or registrant member when the Board approved Dr Patel's special purpose registration on Tuesday, 11 February 2003. At the relevant time, the Board's structure consisted of the following members:

Registrant Members

Dr Lloyd A Toft MB BS (Qld) FRCS (Edin) FRACS (Chairperson)

Dr Mary Cohn MB BS (Qld) M Fam Med (Deputy Chairperson from 11/04/03)

Dr John Waller AM MB BS (Qld) FRACGP FRACMA

Dr Ian S Wilkey MB BS (Qld) LLB FRACPA FAFPHM



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Professor Laurence Basil Geffen BSc MB BCh MSc BA MA DPhil MRANZP FRANZCP
FRACP MD

Dr Vaidyanathan Kalyanasundaram MB BS(Madras) MRANZCP FRANZCP

Dr Mary Mahoney MB BS (Qld) FRACGP Grad Dip Clin Ed (UNSW)

Public Members

Mr Michael Clare Grad Dip Mgt MBA

Ms Peta Frampton BSc Dip Ed Dip Statistics

Lawyer

Ms Rhonda Penny BA LLB Grad Dip Leg Study

Chief Health Officer

Professor Bryan Campbell AM MB BS (Qld) MD FRACP FRACMA (Deputy Chairperson)
(retired 26/01/03)

Dr Gerry FitzGerald MB BS (Qld) FACEM FRACMA MD (Qld) (from 27/01/03)

5. The Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-3" is a true copy of the Board structure and appointments to the positions of Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and members of the Medical Board of Queensland as appeared in the Board's 2002-2003 Annual Report and Financial statement. These are the Board members that were appointed to the Board at the time of Dr Patel's registration. The original Board members were appointed in 1999. The Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-4" is a true copy of Schedule A of the Board appointments to the positions of Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and members of the Medical Board of Queensland in 1999.
6. The Medical Board of Queensland receives administration and operational support from the Office of Health Practitioner Registration Boards (OHPRB) pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Registration Boards (Administration) Act 2000*.

TERM OF REFERENCE (1)

Registration

7. The role and conduct of the Queensland Medical Board in relation to the registration of overseas-trained medical practitioners or doctors (or International Medical Graduates) is governed by the *Medical Practitioners Registration Act 2001* ("the Act"), in particular, the registration in an "area of need" (section 135).


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8. The term "overseas-trained medical practitioners" I would expect, for the purpose of this inquiry to be defined to include those persons who have obtained their primary medical degree (MS MB or equivalent) outside Australia. I note that a large number of specialists registered in Queensland would have obtained some of their specialist qualifications in an overseas country. Although, strictly speaking, these specialist practitioners are overseas trained per se, they are not the practitioners seeking special purpose registration in an area of need such as Bundaberg Base Hospital. Such latter practitioners have invariably obtained their primary medical degree in another jurisdiction, outside Australia.
9. The role of the Queensland Medical Board, is to provide for the registration and monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners and to impose and enforce any obligations in order "to protect the public by ensuring health care is delivered by registrants in a professional, safe and competent way; with the aim to "uphold the standards of practice within the profession and to maintain public confidence in the profession" (section 7 of the Act).
10. The Board fulfills its role by carrying out numerous functions including the assessment of applications for registration by overseas-trained medical practitioners; the monitoring and assessing of overseas-trained medical practitioners who satisfy the requirements for registration, and ensuring that they comply with any conditions of registration (pursuant to section 11 of the Act). The Board is also required to keep a register of records relating to registrants.
11. The majority of overseas-trained medical practitioners apply for registration in Queensland by obtaining "special purpose registration" in an "area of need" (section 135 of the Act). They may also apply for "general registration" if they have passed the examination set by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and are "fit to practise" having regard to the applicant's health, command of the English language and criminal history. (sections 42-45 of the Act).
12. Board members do not conduct the assessment of the eligibility of overseas-trained medical practitioners for registration. The Board relies upon the Registration Advisory Committee ("RAC") Report in order to make the final decision about the registration of a practitioner. The RAC (which is a sub-committee of the Board) relies upon a more detailed examination of the suitability of each applicant for registration. The RAC relies on the OHPRB registration staff officer(s) to assess the eligibility of special purpose applications for "general registration" or "area of need" by checking the submitted documentation and


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ticking off a "Checklist". I understand that an application for registration must be made in the approved form, accompanied by evidence of relevant qualifications and fitness to practise, including a Certificate of Good Standing (COGS), or equivalent document (such as a Verification of Licensure). I am aware that the statement of Mr Michael Demy-Geroe provides a detailed discussion of the assessment procedure.

Area of Need

13. A person is eligible for special purpose registration if she/he is fit to practise the profession (certificate of good standing or the equivalent) and are qualified for registration (relevant proof of medical degrees) pursuant to section 131 of the Act. Special purpose registration remains in force for the period of 12 months and the applicant is required to reapply for a further year of appointment, given they have an employment contract. I am aware that in his statement to the Inquiry, Mr James Patrick O'Dempsey has canvassed the issue of overseas-trained medical practitioners filling areas of need in Queensland.
14. An overseas-trained medical practitioner does not require an Australian medical degree or to have passed the AMC examination, in order to apply for registration in an area of need. A person is qualified for special purpose registration to practise the profession in an area of need if the person has a medical qualification and experience the board considers suitable for practising the profession in the area. The Minister decides the areas of need for medical service taking into consideration where there are insufficient medical practitioners practising in the State or a part of a State.

Dr Jayant Mukundray Patel

15. I have recently been advised that Dr Patel's application for "special purpose" registration was initially processed by the registration staff member, Ms Ainslie Mullins. Dr Patel appears to have incorrectly completed his application for registration by stating that his registration in another jurisdiction was not subject to any undertaking, conditions, suspension or cancellation. He also appears to have removed a "public order" attachment to his Certificate of Standing. Unfortunately, the missing document was not identified by the registration staff member and therefore the Board was not alerted to the fact of the disciplinary action taken against Dr Patel in the United States. I am aware that the full circumstances of the registration of Dr Jayant Patel is to be canvassed in detail by Deputy Registrar, Mr Michael Demy-Geroe, in his statement to the Inquiry.



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16. I am aware that the RAC considered Dr Patel's application for special purpose registration on 3 February 2003. I was not a member of the RAC at the relevant time of Dr Patel's registration, although I recently became a member of the RAC from 2 December 2004. I understand that the main role of the RAC is to make recommendations in relation to the registration applications to the Board via the Chairperson. I am aware that the procedures of the RAC are canvassed by Mr Michael Demy-Geroe in his statement to the Inquiry.
17. At the time that Dr Patel's initial application for special purpose registration was considered, the Board members of the RAC were Dr Mahoney (Chairperson of RAC), Mr Clare, Dr Toft together with Board staff, Deputy Registrar, Mr Demy-Geroe and Assistant Registrar, Ms Scholl. Dr FitzGerald was also a member of the RAC at the time, however he was an apology at the actual meeting of 3 February 2003. The primary role of the RAC is to assess the suitability of an applicant's qualifications and experience in accordance with the area of need vacancy description.
18. In relation to Dr Patel, the registration Officer completed a "Checklist" of all the relevant documents, qualifications, application form, fees and certificate of good standing (its equivalent) with a tick signifying "yes". The registration Officer can ordinarily be taken to have accurately checked the documentation for authenticity and for any irregularities in the Certificate of Good Standing or equivalent. The section regarding whether Dr Patel was subject to any disciplinary action in another jurisdiction was ticked "No". The section regarding whether he was subject to any disciplinary action in another jurisdiction was ticked "No". The RAC made a recommendation in its report of 3 February 2003, to the Board to approve Dr Patel's special purpose application for registration.
19. The Board members received a copy of the RAC's report about 4 or 5 days prior to the Board meeting on about 11 February 2003. Attached hereto and marked "**EMC-5**" is the RAC report which the Board would either approve or refuse registration (general or special purpose registrants), according to the circumstances. In accordance with my usual practice, I would have perused the RAC report paying close attention to those applicants which had an asterisk (*) next to their names. These are the problematic applicants which we would always discuss at the Board meeting.
20. The Board members also receive a separate document which is a summary of the RAC report to review before the meeting. This lists those applications for registration which require the Board to discuss in detail. Attached hereto and marked "**EMC-6**" is the


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Summary of RAC report which the Board was to discuss at the Board Meeting on 11 February 2003.

21. In total, there was about 115 applications for registration (including general registrations and area of need) tabled for approval or otherwise at that Board meeting. In addition, the Complaints Assessment Committee (CAC) registrants and Health Assessment and Monitoring (HAM) registrants were discussed. The CAC and HAM committees are the two other sub-committees of the Board, with all of their own specific tasks to perform in relation to a range of other registrants. These sub-committees operate as equivalent sub-committees to the RAC. The Board's agenda for its meeting of 11 February 2003 was therefore very full. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-7" is a true copy of the Board's Agenda on 11 February 2003.

Board Meeting - 11 February 2003

22. I do not have any specific independent recollection of the matters that came before the Board meeting on Tuesday evening, 11 February 2003. At that time, I was a registrant or ordinary member of the Board. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-8" is a true copy of the minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Medical Board of Queensland on 11 February 2003.
23. I do not recall Dr Patel being discussed at the Board meeting, as there were about 75 names of overseas-trained medical practitioners applying for special purpose registration considered at the meeting.
24. As part of the Board's agenda, we considered the recommendations provided in the RAC report dated 3 February 2003 (mistakenly dated 2002). Dr Patel's special purpose application would not have been discussed individually due to the length of time this would take for the 75 or so applicants. His application was not one of the asterisked (problem) applications. The Board resolved that "Dr Patel be approved for special purpose registration under Section 135 to fill an area of need as an SMO in surgery at the Bundaberg Base Hospital from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004, subject to completion of registration requirements" (refer to page 20 of the Minutes, Reg No. 1030450)
25. Dr Patel's registration was "subject to completion of registration requirements" because the Board had yet to conduct a personal interview with him. The board's records show that on 31 March 2003, Dr John Waller interviewed Dr Patel at the Board. At that stage, it was part of the Board's protocol to interview special purpose registrants in its assessment of overseas trained medical practitioners' fitness to practice. I have reviewed Dr Patel's file


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and note that Dr Waller marked "yes" next to the criteria of "Certificate of Good Standing" (COGS) however this may not necessarily mean Dr Waller physically checked the "Verification of Licensure". Although there were no criteria set down about how the interview was conducted, in this case Dr Waller would probably have at least checked the 'Checklist' form that a COGS existed.

26. Dr Patel was advised by letter that the Board had granted special purpose registration as a medical practitioner in Queensland for 12 months, which enabled him to practise as a senior medical officer (SMO) in surgery at Bundaberg Base Hospital. He was also advised to notify the Board if his registration had been affected by "disciplinary action or has otherwise cancelled, suspended or made subject to a condition or undertaking".
27. On 2 December 2003, Dr Patel applied to renew his special purpose registration from 1 April 2004 to 30 March 2005. The re-application procedure is discussed in detail in Mr Michael Demy-Geroe's statement to the Inquiry. The Medical Superintendent assessed Dr Patel's performance as "better than expected" in all categories except emergency skills and medical records and clinical documentation" which were consistent with his level of experience. I note that his renewal application for special purpose registration did not require the checking of his Certificate of Good Standing
28. I do not have a specific independent recollection of the ordinary meeting of the Medical Board of Queensland held at the offices of the Board on 27 January 2004. At the time I was the Deputy Chairperson of the Medical Board of Queensland. The Board approved the recommendation of the Chairperson of the RAC to register Dr Patel as a provisional special purpose registrant under Section 135 to fill an area of need at Bundaberg Health Service District from 1 April 2004 for a further 12 month period. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-9" are the Board minutes of the ordinary meeting of 27 January 2004 relating to the approval of Dr Patel's renewal of his special purpose registration from 1 April 2004.
29. I am aware that Dr Patel made a further application for renewal of his special purpose registration dated 2 February 2005. I have perused the file and am aware that Dr Patel's renewal application was processed by registration officer, Mr Duncan Hill on 14 February 2005. I do not have any specific independent recollection of the renewal application being considered, discussed or processed at the RAC meeting on 16 February 2005. It may be that Dr Patel's renewal application was withdrawn from the RAC February meeting by the Chairman, Dr Gerry FitzGerald because of his investigation of complaints at Bundaberg Base Hospital which may have involved Dr Patel. Attached and marked "EMC-10" is a true


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copy of RAC meeting held on 16 February 2005. Therefore, Dr Patel's renewal application also never proceeded to the next Board meeting on 22 February 2005 (as it was never processed by the RAC). I understand that Dr Patel's renewal application never proceeded to the next Board meeting on 22 February 2005. I am aware that Dr Patel's renewal application is also canvassed in Mr Michael Demy-Geroe's statement to the Inquiry.

Assessment of overseas-trained medical practitioners upon renewal application

30. As previously detailed, a special purpose registrant must renew his/her application for registration to practise in area of need every 12 months, given the doctor is afforded a satisfactory performance assessment report and has a job contract in the area of need. The Medical Board of Queensland relies heavily on the assessment by a superior officer, the Medical Superintendent of the Bundaberg Base Hospital in this case, ~~is~~ to provide a correct and accurate assessment of clinical abilities and procedures, in the assessment of the area of need practitioner.

Monitoring of overseas-trained medical practitioners

31. I was not aware of any formal or written complaint regarding Dr Patel until a letter was received by the Board on 30 March 2005, from Dr Gerry FitzGerald advising of Queensland Health's concerns regarding Dr Patel's surgical competency.
32. Essentially, the Board conducts no monitoring of overseas trained medical practitioners, except for the "assessment of performance" by a superior, when the special purpose registrants apply for 12 month renewal of their registration, or if a complaint was received by the Board.
33. The complaints handling system also monitors any written complaints in relation to overseas-trained medical practitioners, pursuant to Part 5 of the HPPS Act . The investigation of any written complaint determines whether a medical practitioner's actions amount to "unsatisfactory professional conduct" for disciplinary action. Mr O'Dempsey's statement canvasses a detailed discussion of the complaints handling procedure.
34. Any overseas-trained practitioners who have general registration are subject to section 70 of the Act whereby an application for renewal must demonstrate "recency of practise requirements" which may include, "the nature, extent and period of practise of the profession by the applicant; any continuing professional education; any research, study or teaching related to the profession and any administrative work relating to the profession".


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35. The HPPS Act also provides the Board the power to suspend or impose conditions and undertakings on the registrant's registration pursuant to section 59(2) and section 118 of the HPPS Act. The Board monitors any such conditions or undertakings to the extent to ensure the registrant adheres to any such conditions or undertakings imposed as a result of disciplinary action.

Dr Jayant Mulundray Patel

36. On or about Wednesday 23 March 2005, I received a telephone call from the Executive Officer of the OHPRB, Mr James O'Dempsey, who advised me that he had received a call from the office of the Minister of Health on that day regarding a Dr Patel. This was the first time that I had heard of any allegations, complaints or concerns relating to the clinical practice and procedures conducted by Dr Patel. Mr O'Dempsey informed me that he advised the Minister's office that he would make inquiries as to whether Dr Patel was the subject of an investigation.
37. The Board had not received any written complaints in relation to Dr Jayant Patel prior to a Queensland Health letter dated 24 March 2005, received on 30 March (after the Easter weekend).
38. Shortly after the Easter weekend, whilst I was on leave, I received a telephone call from an administration officer advising that the Board had received a letter addressed to me marked 'Private & Confidential'. The most senior officer, the Health Assessment Co-ordinator, Jackie Cunningham, opened the letter upon my request and read the content of a letter to the Minister (a copy of which was sent to the Board) which was a written complaint in relation to Dr Patel, from Mr Rob Messenger MP. I advised Ms Cunningham that I would speak to Mr O'Dempsey about it. I did speak to Mr O'Dempsey several times by telephone prior to my return from leave on Friday, 1 April 2005.
39. On 30 March 2005, the Board received a letter from Dr Gerry FitzGerald dated 24 March 2005, regarding the investigations by Queensland Health in relation to Dr Patel's clinical abilities in relation to complex operations.
40. The Medical Board received a further letter from Mr Messenger dated 5 April 2005 and received 7 April 2005, requesting an acknowledgement of receipt of his letter to the Minister and I formally replied on 7 April 2005. We advised that Dr Patel's special purpose registration had lapsed on 31 March 2005 and he was not a registered medical practitioner in Queensland. I am aware that the status of Dr Patel's registration and the details


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regarding the disciplinary action faced by Dr Patel in Oregon and New York is to be canvassed in more detail in Mr Demy-Geroe's statement to the Inquiry.

41. I believe that it has now been determined that Dr Patel had departed the jurisdiction on about 4 April 2005 before the Board's next meeting on 12 April 2005.

TERM OF REFERENCE (3)

42. In relation to any substantive allegation, complaint or concern relating to the clinical practice and procedures conducted by other overseas-trained medical practitioners within and outside the Bundaberg Base Hospital, I can offer the following information:

Dr Henry Andy

43. I am aware of concerns relating to the qualifications and clinical practice in respect of Dr Henry Andy. Dr Andy worked at the Bundaberg Base Hospital as a Junior House Officer from 12 November 2002 to January 2003. I understand the statement of Mr Michael Demy-Geroe canvasses the circumstances of the expiration of Dr Andy's visa. I understand that he worked in the Emergency Department of the Mackay Base Hospital from about July 2002 to August 2002 whilst unregistered. Although I do not recall any Board discussions in this matter, there is a Board minute dated 22 October 2002 in which it was resolved that before deciding whether to grant provisional registration for him to practice at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, that he was to give advice to the Board regarding a period of unregistered practice at the Mackay Base Hospital from 15 July 2002 to 13 August 2002.
44. A letter was received by the Board in about October 2002 from Mackay Base Hospital advising that Dr Andy undertook "observership" in the Emergency Department under the instruction of the SMO. At no time was he held out as a medical practitioner. The Board resolved on 10 December 2002, that Mackay Base Hospital gave an adequate explanation regarding Mr Andy's unregistered status. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-11" is a true copy of the Board Minutes dated 22 October 2002, 12 November 2002, 10 December 2002, 14 January 2003, in relation to Dr Henry Andy.

Dr Tariq Qureshi

45. I am aware of substantive complaints relating to the clinical practice and procedures at Bundaberg Base Hospital in respect of Dr Qureshi, a special purpose registrant. I understand that Dr Qureshi was the subject of two written complaints relating to alleged


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sexual assault on or about 22 October 2003 (Ms I) and on 25 May 2004 (Ms A). The complaints were investigated by the Board under Part 5 of the HPPS Act 1999. Dr Qureshi, has since departed the Queensland jurisdiction and a warrant has been issued by the Queensland Police Service. I am aware that complaints regarding Dr Qureshi are to be canvassed in the statement of Mr James O'Dempsey. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-12" is a true copy of the Board Minutes dated 24 February 2004 and 25 May 2004, in relation to Dr Qureshi.

Dr Malcolm Stumer

46. I am aware of a substantive complaint relating to the clinical practice and procedure at the Bundaberg Base Hospital in respect of Dr Stumer, a general registrant. The Board's solicitors are currently waiting for a further independent medical report as to whether there is any case of unsatisfactory professional conduct for the practitioner to answer. This was a step taken in consultation with the Health Rights Commission. Annexed hereto and marked "EMC-13" is a true copy of the Board minutes dated 27 July 2004 and 23 November 2004, relating Dr Stumer

Dr Keith Muir

47. In early May 2005 the Board was advised that Dr Keith Muir, psychiatrist, became subject to disciplinary action in the United States after he was granted general registration in Queensland. This subject is canvassed by Mr O'Dempsey, in his statement. The Board has requested Dr Muir to provide ^{it} with an undertaking not to practise. Dr Muir has also been provided with a 'Show Cause Notice' as to why his registration should not be revoked pursuant to the suspension by the New York State and New Jersey State authorities. This matter is currently being investigated by the Board's solicitors.

TERM OF REFERENCE (4)

48. The subject of the appropriateness, adequacy and timeliness of action taken to deal with any of the above allegations, complaints or concerns pursuant to the complaints handling procedure and medical assessment monitoring, is to be canvassed in the statement of Mr O'Dempsey. When the new HPPS Act was introduced, there was a backlog of investigations which I understand has since been largely cleared. The time taken to investigate such complaints now has been reduced significantly to around 6-8 months, except in the more complex cases.


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Recommendations

49. The Board has made certain recommendations to the Minister for Health including changes in administrative procedures and suggested amendments to the Act, to minimise any fraudulent or inappropriate registration of overseas trained practitioners. The report of the Medical Board of Queensland to the Honourable Gordon Nuttall MP, Minister for Health, dated 15 April 2005, prepared by Mr Jim O'Dempsey, Executive Officer and Mr Michael Demy-Geroe, Deputy Registrar, regarding the registration of Dr Jayant Patel, is produced by and referred to by another board witness.
50. The remedial actions that the Medical Board of Queensland has initiated to address the systemic flaws identified in Attachment (A) to the report to the Minister, consists of immediate, short-term and medium-term actions. Firstly, an immediate audit was undertaken of all special purpose registrants to ensure that no overseas medical practitioner has fraudulently obtained registration where disciplinary action has been taken against the practitioner in another jurisdiction.
51. Dr Keith Muir has been identified as a general registrant employed at Nambour Hospital, whose licence in the United States had been suspended in New York state after he gained a registration in Queensland.
52. Secondly, so as not to rely on any possibly fraudulent or misleading statements by any medical practitioner applying for registration or renewal, a number of measures have been initiated by the Board, including but not limited as follows:-
- The Board now requires all applicants to have a Certificate of Good Standing or its equivalent, provided directly to the Board.
 - Software processes have been introduced to allow for internet searching for undeclared disciplinary action;
 - Internal training of staff has been initiated as to the procedures for reviewing the Certificates of Good Standing or equivalent and reporting to the senior officer (presently Ms Robyn Scholl) in charge of the overseas-trained medical practitioner applications;
 - A requirement for certification of qualifications by recruiting agencies has been introduced;


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- A new registration team has commenced, led by a senior manager responsible for quality registration processing;
 - Supervision of overseas-trained medical practitioners has commenced, including direct supervision and a report in 1-3 months of initial practice;
 - A clinical interview and examination for individual assessment of fitness to practise is currently being developed.
53. Other pre-registration and post-registration initiatives are outlined in the medium-term actions in paragraphs 12 and 13 in the Report. Approval from the Minister is being sought for an additional application fee for special purpose registration and renewal of registration to cover the increased costs of processing these applications. An increased sanction pursuant to Section 273(1) of the Act is being sought in respect of false, or misleading statements by applicants for registration.
54. These initiatives by the Medical Board of Queensland will give Queensland perhaps the most rigorous requirements for special purpose registration for overseas-trained medical practitioners in Australia. This is in keeping with the main role and purpose of the Board, namely to protect the public by providing safe and competent registrants, upholding professional standards and maintaining confidence in the health system.
55. The Medical Board of Queensland is of the view that these recommendations should be supported on a National level. A Nationally consistent processing system for the registration of overseas-trained medical practitioners, particularly in relation to special purpose registrants, should be undertaken by all of the State Medical Boards.

Statement taken:

STATEMENT signed *17th* day of *May* 2005


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