

Communiqué

CPMC Stakeholder Meetings: 13 November 2025, Sydney

Overview

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) convened its quarterly Stakeholder Meetings on 13 November 2025. The meetings were held on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. The meetings brought together nearly 45 participants from medical colleges, Ahpra, the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Medical Council, the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the Health Workforce Taskforce, the Medical Board of Australia and consultants KPMG and Miller Blue Group. The Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing, Mark Butler, also kindly gave an address to the meeting.

Health Workforce Priorities

There was acknowledgement that 2025 has been an exceptionally busy year, with extensive consultations and workshops progressing recommendations from both the Kruk Review and the NHPO Review. Discussions highlighted the increasing focus on workforce distribution particularly impacting rural and regional areas as well as outer metropolitan areas, workplace culture and safe training environments. Stakeholders reinforced the importance of coordinated action across jurisdictions, agencies and colleges to ensure reforms translate into practical improvements for trainees, supervisors and patients.

Accreditation and Training Standards

The Australian Medical Council outlined progress on the new Standards for Assessment and Accreditation of Specialist Medical Programs, with the next consultation scheduled for early 2026. Stakeholders discussed the broader move towards outcomes-based approaches and the importance of aligning college-specific requirements with national workforce priorities. There was strong interest in collaborative approaches to supervision, site accreditation and supporting trainees in complex training environment.

International Medical Graduates and Pathway Streamlining

We discussed the approach to streamlining SIMG pathways and how the Medical Board relies on advice from the medical colleges when assessing SIMG's experience. There was also discussion on the nuances of different training programs undertaken overseas and the scope of practice of international graduates. Concerns were raised about visa and immigration delays.

Specialist Training Program and Rural Workforce

Workforce maldistribution remains a critical focus of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and expanding training opportunities in regional areas is central to national reform efforts. There was recognition that the District of Workforce Shortage and Distribution Priority Areas schemes need revisiting.

Key discussions highlighted the potential for more ambitious options resulting from the Specialist Training Program (STP) redesign, which is underway by KPMG, with the focus of STP to support training positions in regional, rural and remote areas and in private health settings. It was highlighted that there should be increased focus on innovation for rural and regional supervision.

The CPMC Chair Associate Professor Sanjay Jeganathan proposed establishing multi-specialty rural training hubs, building on initiatives by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR), to be funded as part of the STP Redesign. He outlined that by expanding the specialist workforce in regional areas, these hubs could strengthen rural and regional service capacity, improve access, and help to reduce out-of-pocket costs for patients. It was highlighted that training in the regions provides a significant learning opportunity, and this should be highlighted and promoted to medical graduates. A key takeaway was: "Recruit in the regions, train in the regions, and specialists will remain in the regions."

Ministerial Remarks

The Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing addressed the meeting, acknowledging the collaborative engagement between the sector and the importance of joint efforts to strengthen Australia's specialist workforce. The Minister thanked the outgoing CPMC Chair Associate Professor Sanjay Jeganathan for his leadership and welcomed the incoming Chair Associate Professor Karen Fielding, who will assume the role of Chair in January.

Workshop: Supporting and engaging Australia's Doctors Outside Training Programs

A workshop facilitated by Dr Jo Burnand from the Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils (CPMEC) focused on the experiences of doctors who have completed their medical degree and internship but are not yet part of a specialist training program. It was recognised that these doctors:

- Play a critical role in delivering essential clinical services but often lack structured supervision, feedback, career development, and appropriate recognition for their contribution.
- Experience professional uncertainty, isolation from peers and colleges, and limited connection to broader system-level workforce planning.
- Report reduced wellbeing and morale, with many reconsidering their future in medicine.
- Do not all want to, or have the capability to, progress into specialist training.

Discussion included potential initiatives such as independent career advisors, competence-based assessments, micro-credentials or graduate diplomas, and recognition of prior learning and other options that support skills development outside traditional training programs. Some colleges highlighted existing initiatives such as Associate Fellowships that support professional identity and progression.

It was agreed that these doctors are an essential component of the medical system and are the backbone of public hospitals and there are opportunities to strengthen the branding and recognition of these "hospital specialists" and considering changing the terminology used to describe this group, noting that language plays a role in professional identity, respect and belonging.

Access, Affordability and Patient Experience

The AMA led discussions on the recent media coverage that has highlighted rising specialist fees and long wait times in public outpatient clinics. Discussions focused on the importance of ethical and compassionate billing practices, including greater transparency around fees and ensuring patients provide informed financial consent. Participants also noted the need to improve access and reduce financial barriers for patients seeking specialist care.

Thank you

A spirit of collaboration underpinned the meeting. The CPMC warmly thanked all stakeholders for their active participation and valued contributions to these discussions.