

**NEWS RELEASE BY
THE AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL COUNCIL
AND
THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

MEDICAL SCHOOL RECEIVES FULL ACCREDITATION

Australia's national accreditation and standards body for basic medical education, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), has granted the School of Medicine at the University of Tasmania accreditation for the maximum period, which is ten years. The AMC's decision is based on the detailed report of a visiting review team, focussing on the School's progress since the last AMC assessment in 1991. The President of the AMC, Professor John Horvath commented: "When the AMC visited the Tasmanian Medical School in 1991, it identified several areas of weakness including aspects of the curriculum, the relationships between the University and the health services, funding and administrative issues, and the need for further development of research activity. As a result of those concerns, the Medical School was awarded accreditation for a limited period, and invited to ask the AMC to return within the period of accreditation to decide whether or not it should be extended to the full ten years. The decision to extend the accreditation means that Tasmanian graduates will continue to be eligible for registration as medical practitioners in any State or Territory of Australia."

Professor Richard Larkins of the University of Melbourne, who led the team which conducted the 1991 assessment of the School, headed the six-member AMC review team which spent a week at the School in September 1995. The team talked to students and recent graduates of the medical course, staff of the School and the teaching hospitals in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, and representatives of the medical profession and the Department of Community and Health Services.

Professor Larkins said: "The School has responded very positively to the AMC's 1991 assessment report and has made significant progress towards resolution of most of the problems. In the curriculum, the School has diversified its range of teaching and assessment methods, and has addressed inadequacies in gerontology, geriatric medicine and adolescent health. General practice and community medicine can now be described as very good educational experiences, and the School's proposals in rural medicine such as the development of rural teaching centres in Smithton and Scottsdale are exciting. The School's research profile has expanded, and opportunities for students to experience research are being incorporated in the course."

The AMC report comments on the "striking improvement" in the School's relationships with the Department of Community and Health Services and the teaching hospitals, and the benefits that have resulted from this change. Another development that is commended is the School's increasing use of teaching resources outside Hobart. The review team has commented on the enthusiasm and

commitment of the many general practitioners from across Tasmania who are involved in teaching, and of the clinical teachers and the Hospital administration at the Launceston General Hospital, and the North West Private and North West Regional Hospitals in Burnie. The team also commended the School on its improved performance in research.

Whilst the School now has full accreditation, the AMC has identified a number of areas where further work is needed and, as a condition of its accreditation, the School will be required to provide evidence of progress in these areas. These include weaknesses in staffing, the further development of the curriculum, and several administrative and management issues.

Professor Larkins said: "The overwhelming impression of the review team was that the School enjoys the strong support of the medical profession, the hospitals, the Department of Community and Health Services, and the community. This makes the AMC confident that the recent progress can be sustained and the remaining problems can be addressed positively."

The Head of the School, Professor Don Marsden, and the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Alan Gilbert, have been given copies of the detailed AMC report. In response to the report, Professor Marsden said: "We are very pleased with the outcome of the accreditation process. The AMC has acknowledged the considerable work we have done to date and we can now continue our progress with a high level of confidence in the long-term future of Tasmania's Medical School."

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