



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **AMC Recruits Sewell to Head SEAC**

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The Australian Medical Council (AMC) has announced the appointment of internationally recognised paediatrician, Associate Professor Jill Sewell AM, as chair of the AMC's Specialist Education Accreditation Committee (SEAC).

Prof Sewell succeeds AMC President, Professor Richard Smallwood AO, as chair of SEAC.

Prof. Sewell is the Deputy Director and Director of Clinical Services at the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH), in Melbourne, a principal paediatric specialist at the RCH and Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne.

She has been a member of AMC accreditation teams assessing the training programs of other Colleges, and was President of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians when it was accredited.

Prof. Smallwood said the AMC and SEAC would be further strengthened by Prof. Sewell's appointment.

"We are delighted to involve a person of Professor Sewell's integrity, calibre and experience in the operations of the AMC," he said.

Prof. Sewell said she was pleased to accept her appointment at a critical time in the history of medical regulation and accreditation.

"As we move into national registration and accreditation, it is important to have very experienced people involved in specialist education, so we can have as much informed contribution as possible with the governments and bureaucrats who are planning such significant change," Prof. Sewell said.

Prof. Sewell identified two immediate challenges for specialist education and accreditation: clinical placements for trainees which match evolving population health services, and overall standards of accreditation, including the use of accreditation as a performance improvement tool as the national registration and accreditation scheme is developed.

"There are obvious challenges for each College whose training program is being assessed. The challenge for the AMC is to help each College to develop the most modern educational principles in the education and training of the specialists of the future in Australia," she said.

Clinical placements for training were also a huge issue across Australia, given the increased number of medical students, who will enter vocational training in the near future.

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"To secure training opportunities for all specialist trainees, clinical placements will need to be expanded dramatically - beyond the public sector to the private and community sectors. This is supported by government. But there are issues of overlapping demands between colleges, demands for placements in the same institutions by other health professions and the ongoing challenge of maintaining standards and appropriate supervision of all trainees through this process," she said.

"Specialist education would also need to pay attention to the changing demographic of graduating medical students - as a result of both continuing generational change and the restructuring of many university medical schools to focus on post-graduate medical courses," she said.

"Issues like changing attitudes to technology and learning will need to be addressed by the colleges as they continue to improve and progress their educational programs," she said.

The requirement in the latest draft of the national registration legislation - 'Bill B' - to mandate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all registered health professionals would challenge Colleges to think about their CPD programs and the AMC to think about its accreditation requirements.

She said the AMC's response to the National Registration and Accreditation System made clear how critically important it was that Bill B - the proposed draft underpinning legislation - meets the needs of the Australian population in terms of future standards.

"A critical issue in current draft of Bill B is to separate performance management from complaints or conduct investigations," she said.

"In the last 10 years, medical boards have generally supported performance improvement and separated the investigation of complaints about doctors' conduct from issues related to performance. This constructive approach should continue in the national scheme," she said.

She said the AMC's long history of involving consumers across its operations was also a strength.

"It's a great credit to the AMC that not only have they managed to encourage the participation of strong health consumer advocates through the consumer movement, they have been able to source and keep involved in the organisation really insightful non-medical members of the community. This mix adds real depth to the AMC," Professor Sewell said.

As she assumed leadership of SEAC, Prof. Sewell paid tribute to her predecessor, Professor Smallwood, who "was probably the most experienced person we've had in Australia in medical education and administration in the last 20 years".

"Professor Smallwood has brought a fabulous breadth and depth of experience to the AMC - as a clinician, as professor of medicine, as President of the College of Physicians and as Chief Medical Officer - he has brought insight about standards in medicine and education, health governance and of course a political and bureaucratic understanding about how systems work," she said.

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