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## Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria

The Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria is a statutory authority established to protect the community by ensuring doctors maintain professional standards and practise ethically and competently.

The *Medical Practice Act 1994* guides the operations of the Board and clearly states that the Board's main purpose is to protect the public. From July 2007, there will be a new piece of law guiding the operations of the Medical Practitioners Board. This is called the *Health Practitioners Registration Act 2005*. This change will not affect the role of the Board.

The Board:

- Decides who is qualified and fit to practise medicine in Victoria
- Registers medical practitioners
- Promotes good medical practice
- Deals firmly and fairly with doctors whose fitness to practise is in doubt. This includes investigating complaints about doctors' conduct and concerns about their professional performance or their health, if this is affecting their ability to practise.

The Board also works in partnership with the medical profession and the community to identify, understand and address issues of concern, and to promote and support high standards of medical practice.

### Common issues for complaints

The Board investigates complaints about any aspect of a doctor's professional activity. It takes seriously all matters raised by the community and investigates them thoroughly. People refer a range of concerns about their doctors to the Board, including:

- Poor standards of practice
- Inadequate care
- Poor communication
- Missed or wrong diagnosis
- Failure to provide medical reports
- Boundary violations, including sexual misconduct.

### Making a complaint

In protecting the community, the Board is responsible for investigating complaints about the professional conduct of doctors.

Complaints about the provision of health services can also be made to the Health Services Commissioner, whose office deals with matters that are suitable for conciliation.

The Board and the Health Services Commissioner work together to determine which agency should investigate each complaint. Complaints about the professional conduct of medical practitioners can be made to the Board.

### Complaints call centre

The Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria's Call Centre can be contacted by telephoning Tel. 1300 419 495. Skilled members of the Board's staff, who are experienced in handling sensitive information and vulnerable callers, operate the Call Centre. It is open from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm weekdays.

The Call Centre is open to anyone with inquiries about the Board's complaints investigation processes or who is seeking further information about a matter before making a formal written complaint.

## Written complaints

These should be addressed to the Board at:  
Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria  
GPO Box 773H  
Melbourne Vic 3001

## The investigation process

All complaints made to the Board are taken seriously. The complaint is first analysed to see if it relates to the professional conduct, professional performance or the health of a doctor, or if it is better referred to another agency for investigation.

## Professional conduct

Professional conduct complaints are managed in the following way:

- Allegations about the professional conduct of doctors are referred for a preliminary investigation by Board staff. Some less complicated complaints are resolved quickly with early intervention.
- All reports of preliminary investigations are presented to the Board, which must determine if:
  - No further investigation is required and the matter is closed.
  - The matter is referred to an Informal Hearing for further investigation. These matters involve less serious allegations about the professional conduct of the doctor and are closed to the public and the media. Informal hearing panels that find the allegations against the doctor are proven have the power to caution, counsel or reprimand the doctor, or order him or her to undergo further education or training.
  - The most serious allegations are referred to a Formal Hearing. Formal hearings are open to the public and the media (although the identity of the complainant is protected by law) and both the doctor and the Board are entitled to legal representation. Formal hearing panels can impose a range of penalties on doctors against whom allegations have been proved, including a reprimand, placing conditions on the doctor's practice, suspending the doctor from practice for fixed periods, or cancelling the doctor's registration.

## Professional performance

If the complaint relates to unsatisfactory professional performance, the Board will appoint a registered medical practitioner to undertake a preliminary investigation. Part of the preliminary investigation might include a performance assessment by peers of the doctor. In taking this pathway, the Board aims to work constructively with medical practitioners to improve their performance and help them remain in safe, active and useful practice.

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria, Complaints Call Centre Tel. 1300 419 495 – to discuss an issue before lodging a formal complaint
- Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria Tel. 1300 419 495
- Health Services Commissioner Tel. (03) 8601 5200 or 1800 136 066

## Things to remember

- The Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria protects the community by ensuring doctors maintain professional standards and practise ethically and competently.
- All qualified doctors must be registered with the Board.
- Allegations of improper or unprofessional conduct are investigated.
- The Health Services Commissioner may also investigate allegations.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

This Better Health Channel fact sheet has passed through a rigorous approval process. The information provided was accurate at the time of publication and is not intended to take the place of medical advice. Please seek advice from a qualified health care professional.

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