

Dr Duncan Syme  
President  
Australian Medical Professionals Society  
[duncan.syme@redunion.com.au](mailto:duncan.syme@redunion.com.au)

12 June 2025

Mr. Justin Untersteiner  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)  
GPO Box 9958  
Melbourne VIC 3001  
Email: [justin.untersteiner@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:justin.untersteiner@ahpra.gov.au)

Cc:  
Dr. Susan O'Dwyer  
Chair  
Medical Board of Australia  
GPO Box 9958  
Melbourne VIC 3001  
Email: [Susan.ODwyer@health.qld.gov.au](mailto:Susan.ODwyer@health.qld.gov.au)

**Restoring Integrity in Medical Regulation: A Call to End Politically Motivated Investigations and Uphold Ethical Medical Practice**

Dear Mr Untersteiner

The Australian Medical Professionals Society, write to express our growing alarm at the continuing persecution of Australian doctors who acted ethically and courageously during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we highlight the cases of Dr Mark Hobart, Dr Valerie Peers, and Dr Denes Borsos, professionals who remained true to the Hippocratic Oath, upheld informed consent, and provided patient-centred care during a time of great uncertainty and coercive public health policy.

Doctors in Australia are facing investigations, disciplinary actions and reputational harm, not for negligence or malpractice, but for refusing to abandon core medical ethics in favour of politically driven mandates. Their 'offences' were to act in their patients' best interests by thinking critically, speaking honestly, and correctly questioning what was baselessly being forced upon them.

While the health administration and political leaders continue to avoid accountability for the disastrous decisions made during the pandemic, decisions now widely criticised for lacking evidence, proportionality and transparency, these doctors are being punished for having been right too early.

The flawed and unprecedented public health measures imposed throughout the pandemic caused substantial and lasting harm to physical and mental health, to education, to livelihoods, and to the

economy as a whole. These sweeping decisions were made without clear or publicly accessible risk-benefit analyses, and were often justified using unsubstantiated claims that ‘tens of thousands of lives were saved.’ These turned out to be marketing claims and they relied on deeply flawed modelling that predicted catastrophic death tolls, predictions which were not widely shared by the scientific community and which did not materialise. Meanwhile, the real data were unconscionably manipulated and presented in ways designed to amplify fear rather than foster informed public dialogue.

It is clear to many Australians and to the international audience that the actions taken by AHPRA and the Medical Board of Australia have not been about public safety in recent years. Instead, they strongly appear to be enforcing a rigid orthodoxy by silencing those who question, and crushing those who speak out, in addition to shielding those responsible for harmful policies. The regulatory process, in these cases, has become a tool of political retribution, rather than logical, professional conduct.

Tribunals such as VCAT and NCAT, where some of these doctors are being tried, have increasingly come to be seen as kangaroo courts, presiding over agenda-driven show trials where fairness, due process and the right to dissent are all but absent. These forums have failed to uphold the rights of doctors who acted ethically, legally and in the public interest.

The real threat to public health is not the ethical doctor who exercises independent clinical judgement. The threat lies in a regulatory regime that punishes such doctors, that stifles debate, suppresses truth, and prioritises political protection over medical integrity. Furthermore, pursuing practitioners where there is no evidence of patient harm, and no valid patient complaint, directly contravenes the National Law’s requirement that regulation be responsive, risk-based, proportionate, timely and appropriate, and apply the least restrictive regulatory force necessary to manage risks to the public. Yet these protracted and punitive actions misuse medical registration fees and impose unjust burdens on ethical doctors all without enhancing public safety.

The Australian public deserves a healthcare system where doctors may act with integrity in order to put patients first in the absence of politically-motivated vilification. We must not allow fear, censorship, and politicised regulation to define the future of medicine in this country.

We note that the new CEO of AHPRA and the incoming Chair of the Medical Board now have a unique opportunity to break with this harmful pattern. Actions speak louder than words. A meaningful first step would be to immediately halt the political and punitive investigations into Dr Hobart, Dr Peers, Dr Borsos, and other ethical doctors against whom there are no current and valid complaints by patients.

On the back of our very successful and well-publicised recent conference (‘The Misdeeds of AHPRA’), we point out to AHPRA, the Medical Boards, and elected representatives the following:

- It is time to cease all politically-motivated prosecution of doctors who acted ethically and responsibly during COVID-19;

- It is time to acknowledge the harm caused by aggressive regulatory actions against doctors who challenged harmful or ineffective public health policies;
- It is time to reform the disciplinary framework to protect clinical independence and ensure protection for whistleblowers and dissenters;
- It now falls to AHPRA and the medical boards to restore public trust in medical governance by committing to transparency, accountability, and the right to professional and scientific dissent.

As a large and rapidly expanding/growing professional scientific organisation we ask for a meeting with you in person to begin the discussion of the best ways to resolve these very important matters.

Yours sincerely,

*Dr Duncan Syme*

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President, Australian Medical Professionals Society