

31 August 2020

Professor Paul Kelly  
Acting Chief Medical Officer  
Commonwealth Department of Health

By email to: [paul.kelly@health.gov.au](mailto:paul.kelly@health.gov.au)

Dear Professor Kelly

**Re: Difficulties for overseas psychiatrists entering Australia**

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) commends the Australian Government Department of Health on its continuing work to contain and manage the COVID-19 pandemic, including implementation of the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan and ongoing investments to increase the capacity of mental health services in Australia. I am writing to highlight the significant issues that are currently being experienced by RANZCP Fellows and Overseas Trained Psychiatrists (OTP) located overseas when seeking to enter Australia.

A number of Fellows and OTPs endeavouring to enter Australia to live and work have notified the RANZCP of significant issues due to repeat, last-minute flight cancellations. Whilst the RANZCP supports caps on international flights to maintain the integrity of Australia's national quarantine system, we would like to highlight the importance of ensuring psychiatrists seeking to enter Australia to work are enabled to do so. This is particularly pertinent given the current increase in people with mental health issues due to COVID-19 placing strain on already limited workforce resourcing. The RANZCP is concerned the safety and wellbeing of people who require mental health care will be impacted by any interruptions to Australia's mental health workforce that could potentially limit service availability.

In addition to the workforce and subsequent service availability and individual wellbeing implications of this issue, the RANZCP highlights that this has been distressing for the Fellows and OTPs involved, some of whom have young families, as it has left their living and working circumstances in a suspended state.

The RANZCP would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues raised and to work with the Department of Health in identifying solutions to enable psychiatrists to return to Australia. For any queries, please contact Rosie Forster, Executive Manager, Practice, Policy and Partnerships Department via [rose.forster@ranzcp.org](mailto:rose.forster@ranzcp.org) or on (03) 9601 4943.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor John Allan  
**President**

Ref: 1898