

Guide to working in Australasia

November 2007

3. Working in the developed world

3.1 Working in Australia

The healthcare system

Australia's public healthcare system, Medicare, is funded largely from general taxation, which includes a Medicare Levy based on a person's taxable income. Australia's public hospital system is jointly funded by the Australian government and state/territory governments and is administered by state/territory health departments.

Medicare provides accessible and affordable healthcare to all Australians and is often provided free at the point of delivery. It covers in-patient and out-patient treatment at public hospitals and 85 per cent of government approved consultant fees. Individuals must pay to see their GP, but they are reimbursed part of the cost. All emergency care is free. The majority of Australians also take out private insurance as a back-up. Every doctor practising under Medicare must obtain a 'Provider Number' from Medicare Australia before being able to reclaim his or her fees.

Medical education

In Australia undergraduate degree programmes last for five to six years, whilst graduate entry programmes last four years. After their degree, Australian medical graduates undertake a 12-month internship. Upon satisfactory completion of their internship, they are granted full registration with the relevant state board or council.

Once fully registered, doctors undertake 'pre-vocational' on-the-job training as Resident Medical Officers (RMOs) or Hospital Medical Officers (HMOs) in Victoria. After one or two years as an RMO, most junior doctors seek admission to a vocational training programme run by one of the specialist medical colleges which set and administer the specialist medical training programmes and examinations. When doctors have met the entry requirements, they secure a registrar post which is accredited for training. Specialist training and practice generally follows the model of the UK training system and usually lasts between three and five years. Doctors training in general practice undertake their advanced training in designated private GP training practices in a community setting.

Upon successful completion of vocational medical training, and in compliance with other college requirements, a doctor is awarded a Fellowship of the College and recognised as a specialist. Additional sub-specialty training may also be undertaken.

Registration

Registration is regulated by the individual State Medical Boards, see below for contact details. There are two kinds of registration available, Registration Without Conditions and Registration With Conditions. For either form, you will need to prove that you have an adequate command of English, are of good standing and have the physical and mental competence to practise medicine.

Registration Without Conditions (full registration) enables doctors to practise unsupervised/independently. It is granted to graduates of Australian and New Zealand medical schools, after completing the approved period of pre-registration training, or to overseas graduates who have applied for migrant status and have completed the Australian Medical Council (AMC) examinations and a period of approved training. The AMC examinations consist of two multiple choice papers, and are a comprehensive test of medical knowledge, clinical competency and performance which evaluate clinical competence by testing principles and medical practice. The standard of the examinations are at the level of newly qualified graduates of Australian medical schools who are about to commence intern training. If you are not a native English speaker, you will also need to pass a language test.

Registration With Conditions is available to overseas medical graduates who will be temporarily in Australia to work in one of the following areas: postgraduate (occupational) training, supervised training, teaching or research, public interest or areas of need; or overseas trained specialists (following assessment by the relevant specialist college). The types of conditions vary depending on the category of registration and the individual doctor. Areas of need include positions/locations where there is a shortage of particular doctors or where positions have remained unfilled despite recruitment efforts to fill them. Area of need covers both public and private sector posts. The state/territory

governments determine Areas of Need and the process for doing so can vary. Further information should be sought from the state medical board about the locale in which you wish to work. Doctors with conditional registration are subject to supervision by an appropriately qualified Australian medical practitioner. Registration with conditions is granted for a specific post and therefore doctors working under conditional registration must reapply for registration if they wish to change jobs.

Doctors with specialist qualifications should apply to the appropriate Australian specialist medical college to have their specialist training and qualifications assessed to determine equivalence. This procedure is administered by the AMC, but the assessment is carried out by the specialist medical colleges. Once a specialist qualification is recognised by the college, you should contact the medical board in the state/territory in which you are intending to practise to obtain conditional registration in a specialist field of practice.

There are two types of specialist recognition: recognition by an Australian Specialist Medical College of a specialist qualification as equivalent to that of an Australian trained specialist and recognition as a specialist by Medicare Australia for billing purposes.

The former relates to medical registration and enables a specialist to practise independently/unsupervised. Australian state/territory medical boards/councils accept overseas trained specialists who are recognised by Australian/Australasian specialist medical colleges for registration to practise in their field of specialisation. The procedure is administered by the AMC, and the assessment of training and experience by the specialist medical colleges.

The second form of recognition enables specialists to provide services attracting a higher 'specialist' rebate under Medicare. In some cases Medicare requires that a service is provided by a doctor who has been formally recognised as a specialist and that the patient has been referred by another doctor, usually a GP. If these requirements are not met, either no Medicare benefit is reimbursed or it will be at a lower level.

Full details of the registration procedures can be found on the website of the AMC at www.amc.org.au

Medicare

All doctors holding registration in Australia can obtain a Medicare provider number from Medicare Australia, enabling them to prescribe pharmaceuticals, order diagnostic tests and refer patients to other doctors. Doctors employed in general practice or private specialist practice must register with Medicare Australia to participate in the Medicare scheme and be eligible to have Medicare benefits paid for their professional services.

Since 1 January 1997 overseas doctors have had access to Medicare provider numbers restricted, with the restrictions being different for temporary and permanent residents. Generally temporary residents are unable to obtain a Medicare provider number unless they work in an approved District of Workforce Shortage – an area in which the general population's need for healthcare has not been met. For those who are permanently resident or have Australian citizenship the Medicare provide number restriction applies for a period of 10 years starting from the date of permanent residence or first medical registration in Australia, whichever is later. In some cases, this can be reduced to five years. For example, if a doctor is willing to take up a hard-to-fill position as a GP. Permanent residents working in a District of Workforce Shortage may apply for an exemption to the 10-year restriction. There are other restrictions for doctors with permanent residency which are listed in detail at www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/Provider+number+restrictions+for+permanent+residents

Immigration

According to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship the preferred temporary visa pathway for doctors is the Temporary Business (Long Stay) visa (Subclass 457) which has a streamlined application process. In order to apply for a visa you must first find a post, you will also need to provide evidence that you are eligible for registration with the appropriate State Medical Board. Alternative temporary immigration routes are the Medical Practitioner visa (Subclass 422) or the Occupational Trainee visa.

Further information is available from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's website at

www.immi.gov.au/skilled/medical-practitioners/visa-options-doctors.htm

Finding a position

Posts are often advertised in UK medical journals such as the BMJ or the classified section of the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA). There are also many locum agencies specialising in employment in Australia, although the positions are often in remote locations rather than the more popular cities. The BMA cannot recommend, or provide lists of, specific agencies, but they advertise regularly in BMJ Careers. Many doctors find that once they have been offered a post, the employer will organise their registration and a visa for them.

Further details about finding a job are available on the Doctor Connect website at:

www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/work-Finding-a-job

Useful addresses:

Embassy/High Commission

Australian High Commission

Australia House, Strand, London, WC2B 4LA

Tel: 020 7379 4334 Fax: 020 7240 5333

www.australia.org.uk

National medical association:

Australian Medical Association (AMA)

The AMA has a federal structure, with the main office in Canberra focusing on national issues and state branches focusing on state matters; they will also be able to advise you on local regulations concerning registration, as these differ from state to state in Australia. If you join, they will be able to provide expert legal, financial and industrial relations advice.

National office

Australian Medical Association, PO Box 6090, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia

Tel: +61 2 6270 5400 Fax: +61 2 6270 5499 Email: ama@ama.com.au

www.ama.com.au

State branches

New South Wales – www.nswama.com.au

Northern Territory – www.amant.com.au

Queensland – www.amaq.com.au

South Australia – www.amasa.org.au

Tasmania – www.amatas.com.au

Victoria – www.amavic.com.au

Western Australia – www.amawa.com.au

Competent authorities – state/territory medical boards/councils

Medical Board of the Australian Capital Territory

Ground Floor, Scala House, 11 Torrens Street, Braddon ACT 2612, Australia

Tel: +61 2 6205 1600 Fax: +61 2 6205 1602 Email: medicalboard@medicalboard.act.gov.au

www.medicalboard.act.gov.au

New South Wales Medical Board

NSW Medical Board, PO Box 104, Gladesville NSW 1675, Australia,

Tel: +61 2 9879 2200 Fax: +61 2 9816 5307

www.nswmb.org.au

Northern Territory Medical Board

PO Box 40596, Casuarina NT 0811, Australia

Tel: +61 8 8999 2400 Fax: +61 8 8999 2600

www.nt.gov.au/health/org_supp/prof_boards/prof_licensing_auth.shtml

Medical Board of Queensland

Medical Board of Queensland, GPO Box 1667, Brisbane, Queensland 4001, Australia

Tel: +61 7 3234 0176 Fax: +61 7 3225 2522 Email: registrations@medicalboard.qld.gov.au

www.medicalboard.qld.gov.au

Medical Board of South Australia

PO Box 791, North Adelaide SA 5006, Australia

Tel: +61 8 8219 9800 Fax: +61 8 8361 9422 Email: admin@medicalboardsa.asn.au

www.medicalboardsa.asn.au

Medical Council of Tasmania

PO Box 8, South Hobart, TAS 7004, Australia

Tel: +61 3 6233 5499 Fax: +61 3 6233 7986 Email: mct@medicalcounciltas.com.au

www.medicalcounciltas.com.au

Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria

GPO Box 773, Melbourne, VIC 3001, Australia

Tel: +61 3 9655 0500 Fax: +61 3 9655 0580 Email: info@medicalboardvic.org.au

www.medicalboardvic.org.au

The Medical Board of Western Australia

GPO 2754, Perth, WA 6001, Australia

Tel: +61 8 9481 1011 Fax: +61 8 9321 1744 Email: registrations@wa.medicalboard.com.au

www.wa.medicalboard.com.au

Royal colleges:

Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists

ANZCA House, 630 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC 3004, Australia

Tel: +61 3 9510 6299 Fax: +61 3 9510 6786 Email: ceoanzca@anzca.edu.au

www.anzca.edu.au

Australasian College of Dermatologists

PO Box 2065, Boronia Park, NSW 2111, Australia

Tel: +61 2 8765 0242 Fax: +61 2 9736 2194 Email: admin@dermcoll.asn.au

www.dermcoll.asn.au

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

College House, 1 Palmerston Crescent, South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia

Tel: +61 3 8699 0414 Fax: +61 3 8699 0400 Email: racgp@racgp.org.au

www.racgp.org.au

www.racgp.org.au/overseasdoctors – information for international medical graduates

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

254-260 Albert Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002, Australia

Tel: +61 3 9417 1699 Fax: +61 3 9419 0672 Email: ranzcog@ranzcog.edu.au

www.ranzcog.edu.au

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists

94-98 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

Tel: +61 2 9690 1001 Fax: +61 2 9690 1321 Email: ranzco@ranzco.edu

www.ranzco.edu

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia

Durham Hall, 207 Albion Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia
Tel: +61 2 8356 5858 Fax: +61 2 8356 5828 Email: contact@rcpa.edu.au
www.rcpa.edu.au

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians
145 Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9256 5444 Fax: +61 2 9252 3310 Email: racp@racp.edu.au
www.racp.edu.au

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
309 La Trobe Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia
Tel: +61 3 9640 0646 Fax: +61 3 9642 5652 Email: ranzcp@ranzcp.org
www.ranzcp.org

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists
Level 9 51 Druiitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 9268 9777 Fax: +61 2 9268 9799 Email: ranzcr@ranzcr.edu.au
www.ranzcr.edu.au

Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
GPO Box 2507, Brisbane, QLD 4001, Australia
Tel: +61 7 3105 8200 Fax: +61 7 3105 8299 Email: acrrm@acrrm.org.au
www.acrrm.org.au

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
College of Surgeon's Gardens, Spring Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Australia
www.racs.edu.au

Other useful contacts:

Australian Medical Council
PO Box 4810, Kingston, ACT 2604, Australia
Tel: +612 6 270 9777 Fax: +612 6 270 9799 Email: amc@amc.org.au
www.amc.org.au

Australian Department of Health and Ageing
www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/For+Health+Professionals-1

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Citizenship
www.immi.gov.au/index.htm

Medicare Australia
www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/

Medical Journal of Australia online
www.mja.com.au

Royal Flying Doctors
www.flyingdoctor.net

Seek – jobsearch and career website
seek.com.au/healthcare/index.ascx

Mediventure

The Australian Medical Association Western Australia and the Western Australian Centre of Remote and Rural Medicine (part of the Department of General Practice at the University of Western Australia) provide short- and long-

term medical support to rural doctors and the community of Western Australia under Mediventure. Suitably qualified medical practitioners (usually doctors with postgraduate qualifications in general practice medicine) are recruited from throughout the world. Medical practitioners from the Western Australian Centre of Remote and Rural Medicine visit overseas countries during the year, outlining the program and detailing the opportunities of working in Western Australia. Mediventure provides the opportunity for both local graduates and overseas based doctors to experience a variety of rewarding medical experiences in rural areas of Western Australia. Further details on the program can be obtained from www.mediventure.com.au/

We are aware that the following organisations may be recruiting doctors in the next year to 18 months.

Tasmania – Recruitment

The Public Hospital system in Tasmania is looking for resident medical officers and registrars for the 2008 clinical year (starting in January 2008). Positions are available for a 12-month period with the possibility of extension. Interested applicants should contact jobsandcareers@dhhs.tas.gov.au and will need to provide an up-to-date CV and relevant information regarding IELTS and qualifications. Further info on the opportunities and healthcare system in Tasmania can be found at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/careers/

Queensland Health – Recruitment

www.health.qld.gov.au/