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Supporting Statement: Position of President-Elect of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), 2023

As psychiatrists, we work with stories, and I am honoured to share mine as I seek your vote to become the next President-Elect of our College.

I had completed MBBS and submitted a thesis for an MD in Clinical Pharmacology in Delhi before I moved to Aotearoa New Zealand. Starting from scratch in a new system was challenging and became an opportunity to rethink my career options. A psychiatry rotation in Waikato Hospital had me hooked, and I joined the RANZCP. I completed most of my training in beautiful Tauranga and Hamilton, New Zealand. Those formative years were a golden time, working with and learning from some fantastic supervisors.

My journey in Australia began in a Community Forensics team in Perth, which at the time was recovering from a severe occupational violence incident. The impact such an event has, not just on the individual but also on the team and the system, has stayed with me and influences my approach in issues around workforce safety and wellbeing.

I obtained Fellowship in 2010 in Melbourne which is home now and began private practice as I balanced the responsibilities of parenting my young family with my clinical work. I still maintain a small practice and think that the work done in the private system is poorly understood, inadequately supported, and under-utilised by the broader health system.

In my private work with asylum seekers and refugees over the last decade or so, I have seen the horrific effects of the trauma they have been exposed to, including the impact of prolonged detention. Being a psychiatrist is a humbling experience- people put faith in us to find hope when, sometimes, none exists.

I have worked in the public health system for many years, providing clinical care, governance, and leadership at team and service levels. I see dedicated clinicians, hampered by the limitations of our health system, still striving to do their best. Over the last many years, I have been extensively involved with policy, advocacy, and strategy work at the Victorian Branch of the College to help improve our systems. There is now a commitment from the State Government to transform the Victorian Mental Health System, with a financial commitment of more than **\$6 billion** and expected ongoing annual funding of a billion or so - the first of its kind.

As the current Chair of the Victorian Branch Committee, I have leveraged this opportunity to reposition the College as a critical stakeholder at the State level, actively engaging with consumer and carer organisations, health departments, the Ministers' Offices and related decision-makers. I believe an engaged membership base is essential to success and I have drawn on interpersonal and networking skills, using open, honest communication, collaborative style of work, and agile and strategic thinking.

I have had excellent opportunities to participate in system transformation at the Federal level, providing Witness Statement to the Productivity Commission in Mental Health in 2019 and being a member of the recently adjourned Better Access Evaluation Clinical Advisory Group in 2022. I have also been deeply engaged with the College at bi-national level as a member of the Membership Engagement Committee, Gender Equity Working Group, and Members' Advisory Council.

I have a passion for doing better and I see our immediate priorities as a College to be:

- **Advocating for ongoing resource parity for mental health** - Seizing the momentum from recent Mental Health reviews in various jurisdictions bi-nationally and COVID experience, RANZCP must **establish itself as a significant stakeholder in every jurisdiction in New Zealand and Australia, both on a Federal and Territory/ States level**, liaising with government, policymakers, and other organizations to shake off the 'poor cousin' image of Mental Health in the health system, helping achieve resource parity with other specialties in all settings- metropolitan, regional/ rural, public/ private sectors, at state and federal level bi-nationally.
- **A highly skilled, responsive and supported workforce** - This is essential for any meaningful mental health reform. Our College plays a pivotal role in ensuring adequacy in the number and quality of psychiatrist **specialists and sub-specialists** to meet the needs of our communities. We should also support non-psychiatrists to develop the skills needed to deliver care to the broader population through initiatives like mandatory psychiatry rotations for Junior Doctors, recently implemented in Victoria. Rural Psychiatry Training Pathway is another unique College project undertaken to respond to community needs. Such initiatives are in place only in some regions and must be offered throughout New Zealand and Australia.
- **Well-resourced systems to support psychiatrists-in-training and SIMGs** - The College's core responsibility is education and training to produce well-rounded psychiatrists. In addition to setting rigorous standards to obtain Fellowship, we need to also focus on the trainees' and SIMGs' experience of their journey to ensure a sense of belonging to the College. The work done by Supervisors, DoTs, DoATs, and SIMG-DoTs needs to be supported by a well-resourced system across New Zealand and Australia
- **Support the CPD Program** - Fellows and members maintain professional standards within the regulations of the College framework. Our CPD is essential to that end and must always be relevant, meaningful, flexible, and easy to negotiate.
- **Promote research in psychiatry** - The membership of our College contains a wealth of academic knowledge and research capability. We must leverage these strengths to constantly broaden the horizons of what is possible to further benefit those we provide

treatment, support and care for. We need to encourage funding and acknowledgement at all levels to foster the next generation of researchers and academic psychiatrists.

The College is a membership organization that functions best when we **weave the rich tapestry** of its various parts together, interconnecting psychiatrists, SIMGs, affiliates, and psychiatrists-in-training as individuals and interest groups. With a cohesive voice, we have greater reach and an ability to influence the world we live and work in. Many members give generously of their time to support the College, and this needs to be continuously harnessed and supported efficiently.

As a College, we aim to provide strong leadership **promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity** in workplaces and broader communities, whether related to gender, sexuality, or culture, ensuring respect and fair opportunities for all. We must continue to be sensitive to the specific needs and acknowledge the richness of the history and culture the First Nations Peoples bring to our society, be it the Māori of Aotearoa or the First Nations Peoples of Australia.

Electing a new President and welcoming a new CEO is an opportunity for us to refresh our strategic direction and align it with our core College values.

My proven track record, extensive leadership experience at State and Bi-national levels, and first-hand knowledge of working in both Australian & New Zealand health systems, including in the public & private sectors, will be valuable assets to the College.

I would very much appreciate your vote in this Election for RANZCP President-Elect.

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