

I was recently at a high-stakes meeting relating to system transformation when someone said, 'Astha, what are you worried about, psychiatrists will always have a job'. That stopped me in my tracks. Is this how we are perceived by policy and decision-makers?

Mental health is in the spotlight like never before. Reforming the system is a hot topic at all levels of government in Australia and in New Zealand.

This gives us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity

To help develop health systems which provide effective treatment, care, and support to people who need, when they need it, where they need it.

To fix issues around equity of access to care,

To address workforce as well as infrastructure challenges.

I have worked across New Zealand, across Australia; in public as well as private sectors; at all levels from clinical work to governance to transformation work. This has reinforced for me the importance of well-designed systems to support the work we do. And how important it is for others to understand the value we bring to healthcare, both in public as well as in private.

In Victoria, we are currently undergoing the most significant reform in Mental Health in generations. As Chair of the Branch, I have ensured the College is now seen not just as a critical ally but also as a major advisor. This needed active collaboration with officials, politicians, organisations, consumers, carers, and most importantly reaching out to our own membership and being inclusive.

Our College represents various jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand, all of whom have a different identity. And the College plays a crucial role in aligning these different systems, advocating for improvements in each and cross-pollinating the successes.

Maintaining a world-class education and training program is the core business of the College. Not just by setting rigorous standards but also by providing an exemplary educational experience. For trainees, SIMGs, as well as for supervisors and examiners, have the time and resources to perform their roles effectively.

This means we ARE to hold ourselves to rigorous standards for excellence in College governance and to that end, our Board plays a vital role.

We frequently hear "We are the College", but as a Fellowship, how connected do we feel to the College?

So, voting is only the first step in these critical times,  
Electing a President-

A President who can draw on the diversity of our strengths,  
Who values the engagement with the membership.

And the time, energy and commitment generously contributed by you, the members.

I would be honored to have your support in making this vision come true.