

## Statement from Doctors' Health NSW – 1 March 2026

### **NSW doctors face loss of independent doctors' health service following national funding changes from 1 January 2026**

Doctors' Health NSW is an independent, confidential, doctor-led support service that has operated in New South Wales for more than 50 years. Recent changes to the Ahpra and AMA Drs4Drs funding model now place our service at risk of closure. We cannot, with professional and ethical integrity, enter a new contract that would embed the NSW service within a centralised national structure directly linked to the regulator.

Our priority is ensuring doctors and medical students can continue to access timely, confidential, independent support from another doctor without fear. Last year, 345 doctors and medical students accessed support through our 24/7 phone line. More than 1,670 clinicians participated in our education and peer connection programs.

As a registered charity, we provide specialised mental health and wellbeing support led by a team of experienced doctors, drawing on extensive local knowledge, networks and ongoing training in doctors' health.

We acknowledge the arm's-length funding support provided over the past decade through the Medical Board of Australia, using doctors' registration fees. That arrangement supported an independent doctors' health service in NSW, operating separately from the regulator. The shift to a centralised model represents a fundamental change to this structure and to the independence on which confidence in the local NSW service has been built.

The centralised model was developed without consultation with the trusted, independent and locally governed doctors' health services that have operated successfully across Australia for decades.

A change to a generic central model will not improve care for doctors and medical students in NSW. Safe access to support in times of distress depends on the trust of NSW doctors. That trust has been built over decades through confidence in the independence of the service and the careful handling of personal information.

Local knowledge and experience, together with access to NSW clinical networks, are also essential to providing meaningful support within the NSW health system and its distinct regulatory and workforce environment.

For Doctors' Health NSW, stepping away from much-needed funding has been a difficult decision. Protecting the confidentiality and safety of our callers, and maintaining the trust of the profession, must come first. We could not agree to terms that would compromise the independence and safety that underpin this service.

We will continue to provide confidential, doctor-to-doctor care for as long as possible, but without alternative funding, Doctors' Health NSW will close in mid to late 2026.

Closure would increase the risk that doctors delay or avoid seeking help, including during suicidal distress. It would also increase the likelihood that doctors continue working while unwell and unsupported, with flow-on risks for patient safety across NSW.

The loss of Doctors' Health NSW would disproportionately affect specific groups within the medical workforce, including doctors in training, international medical graduates, rural and regional doctors, and clinicians involved in complaints or regulatory processes.

Hundreds of doctors and medical students in NSW rely on Doctors' Health NSW each year. Many more benefit from our locally tailored education and peer connection programs. Whether someone needs a confidential conversation at a difficult moment or support to access local care, Doctors' Health NSW has provided trusted care to colleagues in NSW for more than 50 years.

Doctors' Health NSW is now seeking urgent, financial support from government, stakeholders and the medical profession to ensure this independent service can continue for doctors and medical students in New South Wales.

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**Quotes attributable to Dr Ameeta Patel, Chair, Doctors' Health NSW or Dr Kathryn Hutt, Medical Director, Doctors' Health NSW**

"The welfare and safety of our colleagues is central to everything we do."

"Our priority is ensuring doctors and medical students across NSW can continue to access confidential, independent support from another doctor."

"The previous funding arrangement supported an independent NSW doctors' health service operating separately from the regulator. The new national model represents a fundamental structural change."

"Meaningful support for NSW doctors and medical students depends on local knowledge and local clinical networks."

"We want to keep being here to help those who help others."

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