



29 October 2022

RE: ALIA Professional Pathways Consultation Paper Submission

The Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association (VAHPA) is the union that represents Medical Librarians in Victoria. Given the highly specialised nature of the profession, we have taken feedback from our Medical Librarian members to form the basis of this submission. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to ALIA on the draft framework and future career pathways in the Library and Information Sector (LIS), known as the Professional Pathways.

Our Medical Librarian members have expressed serious concerns about the process and the approach being taken by ALIA to the introduction of micro-credentialling. The pathways plan has been presented with as an inevitability rather than as a proposal and the consultation process appears to be more of a box-ticking exercise than genuine consultation. As specialists in a broader sector, the Medical Librarians fear the integrity of their profession is being seriously threatened and there is no support in the responses that VAHPA received from our membership for the planned micro-credentialling as a pathway into the profession.

It is generally accepted that a “profession” by definition, requires a university-based education qualification. The current qualification pathway for Medical Librarians is via an undergraduate degree course of AQF Level 7 rating and the fear is that micro-credentialling will undermine that. The threat posed by lesser qualified, lower skilled, and consequently, a lower paid workforce replacing them, is real and has played out in other health professional fields.

Employers, often faced with budgetary pressure, look for cheaper labour options and are not necessarily discerning of the level or the standard of the qualification required to perform a

professional role. They will opt for a cheaper option even if that means the role is performed by someone with a lower or partial qualification with a significantly reduced capacity to perform the role, undermining the standards and having a flow-on negative impact on all health professionals who rely on medical libraries as a resource. Their current standard of education and training for Medical Librarians is an undergraduate degree that is required to encompass the full spectrum of skills and knowledge necessary to perform the required role to a professional standard.

As a member organisation representing the majority of allied health professions, across both the therapies and sciences, VAHPA advocates the need for integrity in professional standards. Our members are health professionals from diverse disciplines and to achieve and maintain their standing through qualification, regulation, accreditation and performance, requires considerable study and professional development. In fact, ongoing professional development is now an essential requirement for all health professionals, increasing their dependence on medical libraries and qualified professional Medical Librarians who can support them. Allied Health Professionals rely on the important resources of medical libraries, run by qualified Medical Librarians, as an essential resource in making that all possible.

The lack of information about the courses, content, providers and the actual credentials planned for this pathway framework is very concerning. Asking people to consult and provide feedback without having all the necessary information to be fully informed about the process and outcome, is disingenuous and unfair. An overall lack of transparency adds to the fear of the underlying intent and potential outcomes of such a plan.

Further, the framework and consultation paper fail to explain how these alternative pathways would work in practice. Besides an absence of information about the courses, there is no detail about the practical application in the workplace and where they would fit in established and operational industrial frameworks.



There are significant industrial implications for the introduction of micro-credentialling and likely role replacement that this will lead to. In Victoria the Medical Librarians are covered by the Allied Health Professionals (Victorian Public Health Sector) Single Interest Enterprise Agreement 2020-2021. As AQF Level 7 qualified professionals they are in the career and wages structure for the AHP1 health professions. Without more information, such as what AQF rating was anticipated for the micro-credentialling qualifications, it is expected that people presenting with this level of education will fall well short of meeting the descriptors and definitions required to be included in the AHP1 classification structure. This will lead to a serious undermining of the profession and the professional career structure, with lower remuneration and benefits.

VAHPA is aware that our members have responded directly to the open consultation, questioning the framework and the consultation process. We support their endeavours seeking a frank disclosure of the plans, the structure of the micro-credentialling courses, proposed accreditation, and standards to be applied to these courses.

VAHPA urges ALIA to review your planned pathway framework and reconsider the ultimate motivations and the likely deleterious impact the current pathway project is likely to have on Medical Librarians and the industry itself.

Yours,

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