

2017 AGM Questions & Answers

Potential Questions – related to the Business of the Meeting

	Topic / Question	Answer
1.	NZ \$/surplus and what the money can be used for	<p>Answer The College's current tax status New Zealand Funds need to be applied to costs associated with provision of services & other activities in New Zealand.</p> <p>The surplus that is in New Zealand is due to a significant amount of services in New Zealand being provided from Australian operations. We do not charge the New Zealand operations for these services.</p>
2.	CEO salary disclosure	<p>Answer The College is not obliged to disclose the CEO's salary.</p> <p>The College does report the names of its Key Management Personnel and their aggregate remuneration. This strikes a balance between disclosure (not a legal requirement for the College), privacy of staff and the common practice in private organisations of prohibiting staff from discussing and comparing salaries.</p> <p>Background The College's approach is consistent with other similar organisations and consistent with the College's statutory obligations.</p> <p>Publishing the details of a person's remuneration raises privacy issues and in the absence of any statutory obligation to do so, can only be published with the consent of the individual.</p>
3.	Payments to the President	<p>Answer The payments to the former President were approved by the Board.</p> <p>The former President was reimbursed for expenses and paid for services provided as President to the College in a professional or technical capacity.</p> <p>The President was not paid in his capacity as a director.</p> <p>Background The amount paid to the former President is set out on page 69 of the 2016 Annual Report - \$11,165 in total. \$1,586.36 to the University of Newcastle for reimbursement in relation to mobile and iPad usage costs.</p>
4.	How many re-admission applications has the College received in the last 12 months and why can't these be processed by the Board?	<p>Answer The Board has considered 10 readmissions in the last year. This has added up to 8 weeks to the process for those seeking re-admission.</p>

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5.	Doesn't the Board already have the power to delegate decision making? Why bother spelling out this particular delegation?	<p>Answer Who is a member is fundamental to a member institution such as the College. The Board wanted it clearly articulated in the Constitution that the decision making could be delegated.</p> <p>Background Up until now all readmission decisions are ultimately made by the Board on the recommendation of other College Bodies.</p> <p>The Board does have authority to delegate readmission of Fellowship decisions.</p>
6.	Why won't the Board support democracy and transparency?	<p>Answer The Board does support democracy and transparency. We've emailed the statement of the 141 members to the wider membership several times – unfortunately, we received it too late to include in the printed Notice of Meeting.</p>
7.	Why won't you allow a vote?	<p>Answer We are allowing a vote on the resolution – via the Annual Meeting – in accordance with the College Constitution.</p>
8.	Why are you scared of your members?	<p>Answer We are allowing a vote on the resolution – via the Annual Meeting – in accordance with the College Constitution.</p>
9.	Why do you refuse to allow an independent inquiry into the election?	<p>Answer The College's external advisors Grant Thornton have reviewed the way the election was conducted, and a Board working party has examined the claims made by those who object. The conclusion of both is that the election was fair, ethical and legal. The Board is satisfied with both inquiries.</p>
10.	What has happened to the promise to review democracy and transparency?	<p>Answer We continue to do so. We have revised the structure of the Board to be predominantly elected by the whole membership, and created a new College Council to ensure the Board is advised by the membership. The current Board is fully committed to being open and transparent with members.</p>
11.	Why is the college changing the constitution? (From Australian Doctor)	<p>Answer It is appropriate to ask the membership to amend the constitution to ensure that it is a workable set of rules that meets the demands of the College as it grows and develops. Only members can approve changes to the Constitution.</p>
12.	Is this about attempting to make it more difficult for ordinary members to hold the college to account for its actions? (From Australian Doctor)	<p>Answer One hundred Members will continue to be entitled under that law to put a resolution on the agenda of general meetings such as the annual general meeting.</p>
13.	Is the college going to correct the information and the special resolution withdrawn as requested? (From Australian Doctor)	<p>Answer No – the resolution stands as written, and has been put to members.</p>

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14.	Another allegation is that the college has acted unethically and illegally in circulating inaccurate/misleading information, apparently with the objective of getting them to vote in favour of a constitution changes with dilutes their power hold the college to account. Can the college respond to that claim? (From Australian Doctor)	Answer We reject the claim, and the allegations are unfounded. The College has acted consistent with best practice in ethics, corporate governance and the law.
15.	And can you reveal who has put forward the special resolution to change the college constitution and how many members will have to vote for the changes to take place – is there a minimum number and/or a majority (say 75%) that has to be met. (From Australian Doctor)	Answer Special resolutions require 75% of members voting to vote in favour in order to pass. The Board has put the special resolution to Members at this AGM to determine whether or not members wish this clause (“100 Member rule”) to remain in the College’s Constitution or be removed.
16.	It seems like the membership is routinely being asked to amend the Constitution. Why is this and why not just get a whole new constitution?	Answer It is appropriate to ask the membership to amend the constitution to ensure that it is a workable set of rules that meets the demands of the College as it grows and develops. It may be prudent for the College to consider an entirely new constitution in the future and whether to undertake such a project will be a matter the Board could possibly consider going forward. Background At four out of 5 of the last AGMs the membership has been asked to make constitutional changes.

Questions received from Members –Related to the business of the Meeting (all received after question closed on Monday 1st May)

	FROM	QUESTION	ANSWER
17.	Dr Daniel Wai Tho Ching	Why would you not circulate by email a statement from those who want to vote against special resolution 2?	The College did circulate the statement to Members twice before the meeting.

Potential Questions – not related to the Business of the Meeting

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18.	Election Issue	<p>Answer</p> <p>Complaints about the 2016 elections were dealt with by the previous Board in accordance with the Constitution. They reached the decision that there was no evidence that the events complained of had any effect on the outcome of the election of the President-Elect of the College.</p> <p>The decision of the Board is final as provided by the College's Constitution.</p> <p>The Board will not be considering this matter further.</p>
19.	How are Members selected for committees? (<i>Relates to circumcission working party</i>)	<p>Answer</p> <p>Membership of a College Body is either by election or appointment. Appointed positions are generally filled by an expression of interest process. On occasion members can be approached directly to participate in a College Body.</p> <p>Background</p> <p>The rules around nominating for an elected position are set out in the Nominations and Elections Process By-law. The rules around nominating for a non-elected position and the expressions of interest process are set out in Governance of College Bodies By-law and the Appointment to College Bodies process,</p>
20.	What is the College doing about trainee/member wellbeing?	<p>Answer</p> <p>The College acknowledges the importance of maintaining health and wellbeing as part of professional practice as expressed in our Position Paper on Doctors' Health and Wellbeing published in 2013. The College has incorporated wellbeing and self-care into its professional standards and training documents (Professional Practice Framework and Standards; Supporting Physicians Professionalism and Performance; Professional Qualities Curriculum).</p> <p>The College has also developed a number of learning resources on health and wellbeing including Pomegranate Podcasts, an eLearning module (available in May) and a suite of web-based resources. In May 2016, the College launched a confidential help-line – the RACP Support Program - which is available to all members 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The help line is managed by an independent company that specialises in counselling and psychological support for a range of personal and work based concerns.</p> <p>The College continues to work with government, health services and other professional organisations to promote the health and wellbeing of members.</p>
21.	What's the College doing to improve Indigenous health?	<p>Answer</p> <p>Our work is led by our 2 Indigenous health committees – one Australian and one NZ – each chaired by an Indigenous Fellow, and we have a significant body of work underway. This includes a priority to improve access to specialist care; increase the numbers of Indigenous medical specialists; and improve the cultural competency and safety of our health system. We remain active participants in the Close the Gap campaign in Australia and work closely with a large number of key Indigenous health organisations, including the Community controlled health sector, the Indigenous Drs associations, Reconciliation Australia and many others. We were one of the first Medical Colleges to have a Reconciliation Action Plan, and work is underway on renewing that by the end of this year.</p>

	Topic / Question	Answer
22.	Is the College providing comment on the MBS Review to make sure that specialist items aren't being cut/affected?	Answer The Board established a Working Party on this matter when it was first announced, and the College facilitated a large number of Fellows being nominated to the Review Committees. We actively review all recommendations and provide feedback to the Review, and work very closely with the Specialty Societies on this, as often they are the experts and better placed to comment.
23.	Status of Ethical Guidelines	Answer Guidelines were consulted on across the DFACS, feedback was considered by the ethics committee and in April they finalised the document. It will go back to the DFACs for reconsideration as some expressed concerns about aspects of the document, before it goes to the Board for consideration
24.	Status of review of Conflicts of Interest Policy	Answer The College has a Conflicts of Interest Working Party that is considering the issue of Conflicts of Interest.
25.	Circumcision: Status of update, appointment of Lead Fellow	Answer Appropriate governance processes being followed, can't comment on individual applicants. Note it's a very contentious area, College stands by its original position and process followed but have a policy that position statements get reviewed at the 5 year mark.
26.	Status of divestment of fossil fuel interests	Answer The College has divested its holdings in companies involved in fossil fuel related activities and has an ethical investments policy in place that prohibits the College from knowingly investing in such activities, where an investment does inadvertently occur the college will divest from it in an orderly manner.
27.	Euthanasia: Where is the work up to/why isn't it finished yet?	Answer Discussion paper has been completed and broad consultation is commencing at Congress. Very complex issues, diverse views in membership, important to consult thoroughly and not rush. However, College has made submission on proposed Victorian framework to protect the interest of our members on issues such as conscientious objection

Questions received from Members – Not related to the business of the Meeting

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28.	Dr Jim Newcombe	<p>Trainees of the RACP who undertake joint training with other colleges are currently charged full training fees for their entire advanced training, even during years when training is provided almost entirely by the other colleges. What is the Board doing to address trainees' long-standing concerns regarding this inequitable situation?</p>	<p>Answer This matter has been reviewed by the Finance Committee each year when the question is raised.</p> <p>In 2013 the Finance Committee adopted a set of principles to be used when setting fees and charges in the college that have been endorsed each year. The principles are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Cost Plus Pricing • Purchasing a quality qualification <p>The current practice of charging all trainees the same annual fee charged has been chosen as the most equitable way of ensuring all Trainees are contributing equally to the yearly cost of development, delivery and maintenance of the RACP education programs.</p>
29.	Dr Peter Sainsbury	<p>The wording of the proposed clause 4.6.3 is '... to any College Body as it so determines...' while the explanatory paragraphs regarding this amendment refer to '... the applicable College Body ...'.</p> <p>1. Why does the proposed clause refers to '... to any College Body as it so determines...'; and</p> <p>2. Why there is a difference in the wording between the proposed clause and the explanatory paragraphs.</p>	<p>Answer The proposed wording of the clause in the updated Constitution is drafted to ensure flexibility by not referring to a particular College body or group of bodies. The Board, in delegating this activity, will determine which is the appropriate College body to make these decisions.</p> <p>The purpose of the slightly different wording in the explanatory notes is to give a less technical explanation for Members.</p>

	FROM	QUESTION	ANSWER
30.	Dr Jacky Hewitt	<p>What is the College doing to increase ethnic diversity on its Board? The ethnic makeup of the Board is strikingly uniform. It does not appear to represent the ethnic diversity present in wither the College or the population</p>	<p>Answer The College encourages diversity.</p> <p>Any member may nominate to be an office bearer. Requests for nominations are advertised in College publications and communications.</p> <p>We encourage members to do their part in encouraging diversity by nominating themselves or by encouraging others from diverse backgrounds to participate in College activities.</p> <p>Various committee by-laws have membership requirements based on cultural identity or geographic location to encourage diversity.</p> <p>The different types of committees and roles available assist in encouraging diversity. The College has a Board and various committees and working parties. Some College positions are elected and some are filled by appointment. Some are short term positions and some are 2 year positions with the possibility of renewal. This means that members can nominate for a range of different roles with different workload and time commitments.</p> <p>The College can consider what further steps it can take to encourage greater diversity.</p>
31.	Dr Mohammad Jehangir	<p>What is RACP's stand on recertification of doctors by AHPRA. I feel it will be destructive for medical profession. College or AHPRA should have other means of CPD.</p>	<p>Answer The College supports the principle that doctors should be fit and competent to practice.</p> <p>The College thinks it is reasonable for a regulator (not the College) to request evidence that a doctor maintains the competency to practice.</p> <p>The means by which a regulator should expect doctors to go about ensuring and/or demonstrating their competency should be based on evidence of effectiveness, should be efficient and should be seen as a worthwhile exercise by Fellows.</p> <p>Background The RACP made a careful and comprehensive submission to the MBA's consultation on a discussion document in late 2016. This is available on the website. [Is it?]</p>

	FROM	QUESTION	ANSWER
32.	Dr Malcolm Elliston Scott	Would it be appropriate to have special category for A) Retired & B) 50 year plus membership	Answer Currently all Members over 70 years of age are invited to become Life Members of the College, which provides all the benefits of College Membership without having to pay any annual subscription fees.
33.	Professor Joseph Elias Ibrahim	What step is the board taken to encourage the members to take a great level of participation in elections? Has any consideration been given to a requirement for compelling Fellows to vote in elections? Election of office bearers looks farcical when less than 5% of the total Fellowship has participated.	Answer The College encourages members to vote in College elections by publicising elections in College communications and publications, and by the formal notice of meeting. All members can assist by voting themselves and by encouraging other members to vote in elections and participate in the activities of the College. Background 1,901(8.4% of eligible voters) Members voted in the 2016 RACP President-elect election. Elections for other office bearer positions in 2016 had a turnout of up to 21.7% of eligible voters.
34.	Dr Margaret Rose Gibson	Why can't the annual fees be reduced especially for part timers? Can the donation section of the renewal be removed or at least changed to opt in rather than opt out?	The College currently applies either the fee reduction or an exemption for annual income below a certain threshold, details of which can be obtained from the College. The fundraising activities of the Foundation are currently being reviewed by the Board including donations by Members of the College.
35.	Dr Thomas Arthur Campbell	What would be the net financial benefit to the College if the head office was moved from central Sydney to central Canberra, assuming equivalent sized offices were rented, & the Sydney office were rented or the Sydney office were sold?	Answer The College has a Property Strategy Working Party which considers the requirements for the College in relations to offices. The Property Strategy Working Party is considering all College premises at this time and your comments have been passed on to the chair of the Working Party.
36.	Dr Clair Elizabeth Langford	How many members voted at the last election and what proportion does that represent?	Answer 1,901 Members voted in the last President-elect election. This represents 8.4% of eligible voters. Elections for other office bearer positions held at the same time had a turnout of up to 21.7% of eligible voters.
37.	Professor John Zeigler	What is the board planning to do to restore confidence in the governance of the College?	Answer The Board has the confidence of the membership and is working to continue to strengthen the governance of the College.

	FROM	QUESTION	ANSWER
38.	Associate Professor Deb Friedman	<p>The issue of the very large number of Basic Physician trainees across Australia which make capacity to train difficult and which influence supervision and the examination process.</p> <p>Does the RACP have a clear strategy to address this?</p> <p>Would this be answered by an official entry into training where RACP could dictate the number of BPTs allowable per institution / state?</p> <p>Even without an entry into training becoming a reality, could RACP start by dictating the number of BPTs per hospital / region / state?</p>	<p>Answer</p> <p>The College developed the Capacity to Train Strategy paper¹ in 2015, and in 2016 commissioned an exploratory study to determine how best to model and predict capacity to train at a local and global level.</p> <p>The College will not be seeking to dictate the numbers of training positions, rather our emphasis will be on supporting accredited institutions to effectively determine how many physician trainees they can train. Accredited sites or networks will be required to substantiate their proposed trainee numbers.</p> <p>The College is developing a Selection into Basic Training process in which prospective trainees will apply and be initially assessed through the College as a pre-requisite to applying to a training institution or network.</p>
39.	Associate Professor Deb Friedman	<p>Will RACP have a stance related to junior doctor working hours of 38-43hrs per week? AMA and junior medical EBA dictate their numbers and hospitals are now not willing to pay overtime beyond their hours resulting in limited training over any given year.</p>	<p>Answer</p> <p>The RACP has developed new comprehensive accreditation standards for training providers (health services) that cover a broad range of factors that influence the quality of physician training provided.</p> <p>The new Training Provider Accreditation Standards will be released for broad consultation later this year. For more information please contact AccreditationReview@racp.edu.au</p>

¹ Available on request from educationpolicy@racp.edu.au