



Australasian Medical Publishing Company
Proprietary Limited (AMPCo)

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OPEN LETTER TO THE MEDICAL COMMUNITY

Recent media coverage about the outsourcing of a number of *Medical Journal of Australia* production functions contain numerous inaccuracies and we are deeply concerned that the medical community is receiving misinformation about the rationale and nature of the AMPCo Board's decision.

We are writing to you to explain the process behind this decision and why it is essential to maintain the quality and future sustainability of the MJA.

This project is the culmination of an 18-month review of the AMPCo business where it was identified that the process for producing the MJA in-house was extremely costly and inefficient and could be substantially improved. Indeed the future viability of the Journal was at risk, hence it was deemed absolutely necessary to seek operational efficiencies to put the Journal on a sound financial footing.

The Board consulted with the Editor In Chief - Professor Stephen Leeder from late December 2014 to April 2015. We sought Professor Leeder's feedback on the outsourcing proposal and explored alternative plans with him and his editorial team. All concerns raised by the editorial team were acknowledged and seriously considered by the Board.

After proper due diligence, the Board decided to outsource the production process only to an external provider (Elsevier) with editorial direction, content development and IP remaining wholly within the Journal as a separate function. Elsevier will only facilitate the operational production of the MJA under the direction of AMPCo.

The MJA will achieve significant benefits from outsourcing, including efficiencies of scale, improved production workflow using more up to date technology, whilst drawing on Elsevier's workflow for Journals such as *The Lancet*.

This is a model that is widely utilised throughout scholarly society publishing and has served those societies well as it will ours. Elsevier, like many publishers is a member of COPE, and adheres to the Publishers Code of Conduct, which states that publishers should foster editorial independence.

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As esteemed academics, I am sure you are aware many other journals in Australia work successfully with outsourced suppliers/publishers who support the editorial independence with sub-editing and production functions.

We worked closely with Professor Leeder to reach an agreement on the direction that the AMPCo Board had decided. Unfortunately no agreement could be reached and the Board was left with the only option of concluding Professor Leeder's employment contract. This was a great disappointment to the Board.

We refute the media commentary about his treatment on termination, which is totally inaccurate.

There is no doubt about Professor Leeder's eminence and standing in the medical community - particularly in the field of public health. We wish him well with his ongoing career and have appreciated his service with the MJA during the past two years.

The Board has been criticised for its decision to choose Elsevier for the production of the MJA.

Prior to engagement the Board discussed all issues raised by the editorial team with Elsevier and is satisfied that the issues were fully addressed. It must also be noted that any criticism of Elsevier was related to editorial content and the company will have no editorial role with the MJA.

The Board has also received criticism for not consulting with the wider medical community on this decision. While we greatly appreciate your concern and support of the Journal, unfortunately it is not logistically possible to consult with all the members of our community and we ask that you trust us to deliver the best outcome for the MJA.

Change is always a difficult time in any organisation and can be very challenging. However I cannot stress enough that the future viability of the MJA and the continuation of its success is dependent on ensuring its sustainability and improving the efficiencies of its publication.

We are fully committed to ensuring *the Medical Journal of Australia* remains the leading provider of Australian clinical research, evidence-based reviews and debate on the important issues affecting Australian health care.

Yours Sincerely,

Richard Allely, Chairman, AMPCo Board