

Communique, July 2014

Exciting new developments for the Medical School Outcomes Database (MSOD) project

At the recent Medical Deans Standing Committee meeting on 24 June 2014 it was agreed that Medical Deans would [engage the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(AIHW\)](#) by a subcontract [to provide ongoing data management, regular reporting and necessary analyses of the MSOD dataset](#) on our behalf. AIHW are perfectly set up to do this from both a legislative and infrastructure perspective as outlined by Mr David Kalisch, Director of AIHW, who presented to the Deans on that day. Such a move will provide the necessary services to put the MSOD dataset on a secure and sustainable footing. Fundamental to such a move is that the IP of the MSOD dataset rests entirely with Medical Deans.

Consistent with the advice from our funders we have recently designed [a new 'one snapshot' survey of medical students](#) to be ideally delivered toward the end of their medical studies. This new survey which is undergoing some internal validation at present covers all the variables previously contained in the commencing student questionnaire, the exit student questionnaire and the MSOD medical school data collection (MSD). The survey has also been streamlined with a reduction in free text fields.

Medical Deans have also agreed for AIHW to begin immediate work on [translating this current paper based survey into a secure on line survey](#) using their expertise and systems that already deliver large national surveys.

For the 2014 exit survey we plan to [trial the use of this secure on line survey with some schools using tablets or laptops](#) at the school survey venue rather than paper. This will ensure ongoing high response rates and provide data directly to the database with minimal errors. 2014 paper exit surveys will still be provided in the usual manner for those not trialing the online version.

Data Linkage and longitudinal tracking

Medical Deans has recently [established a cross agency governance group](#) with representation from HWA (will transfer to Department of Health), AHPRA, AIHW and Medical Deans to work through the major structural, governance, legal and ethical issues to support a trial of data linkage between the MSOD medical student data, the medical registration data and the national medical workforce dataset.

It is likely these issues can be adequately addressed in the next 6 – 10 month

Alongside this [a cross agency technical group is being formed](#) to address the implementation of the data linkage process. Development of a statistical linkage key will satisfy the technical hurdle to achieve this.

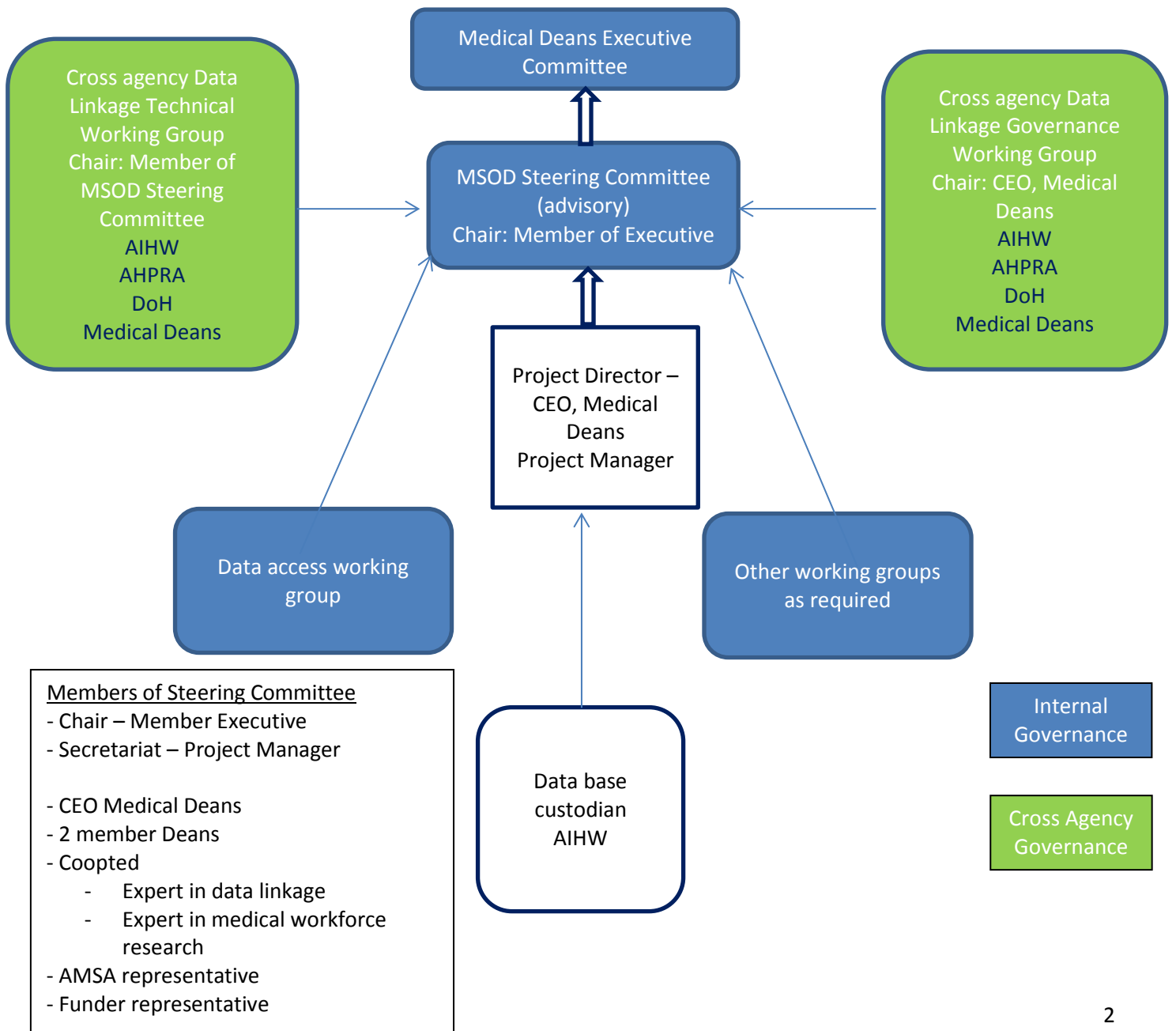
[Data linkage allows longitudinal analysis](#) (at a unit record level) of medical students through to prevocational and vocational employment without need for further survey administration. (nearly 100% of doctors currently complete the medical workforce survey each year)

Governance changes

Medical Deans at its June meeting also endorsed a new governance structure for MSOD that is consistent with other Medical Deans projects and adaptable to new developments especially with data linkage as described above.

The new structure is shown below.

Appointments to the new committees will be made in the next few months and further updates will follow. The work of the previous MSOD Board and Advisory Committee will cease at the end of July and the Research and Scientific Committee at the end of September. On behalf of the Executive I wish to thank all of the members of these committees with particular mention of Professor Beilby and Professor Roberton for their strong leadership over the last 10 years.



Additional Activities for 2014

As we move to longitudinal follow up of medical students via data linkage there will be **no further administration of post graduate surveys by Medical Deans from 2014 on.**

However **medical schools will still be provided with their individual school data reports based on the 2012 and 2013 surveys** that can be used for internal quality assurance activities.

For researchers wishing to access MSOD data for research purposes, the Research and Scientific Committee will still consider current applications until the end of September. After that date it is intended that the new data access working group will take up this activity. However, as the data set is being transitioned to AIHW in the next 6 months access to this data for these additional purposes may be impaired.

Activities beyond December 2014

With the dismantling of HWA and transfer of the majority of functions to the Department of Health **uncertainty still exists about the potential to receive any ongoing external project funds after 31 December 2014.** The Department is aware of this and Medical Deans are actively engaging key officers about the future of this important project. It is well acknowledged that the dataset is a significant asset particularly for external workforce planning but the current fiscal environment means that access to support funds is much more competitive. We are unlikely to know the outcome of any potential future external funding for some months.

In the event of no external funding for MSOD for possibly some years Medical Deans has approved basic funding from Medical Deans core operational budget to allow the dataset to safely sit in the AIHW platforms but with no new surveys or regular data analysis/reporting. There **may be scope for a researcher user-pays model to access the current data for research purposes** with the approval process being actioned through the data access working group and the Steering Committee. This can be explored further once we have more certainty about our funding options.

In the event of external funding for MSOD for 2015 the intent is to continue to manage the project centrally through a Medical Deans based project manager and an advisory Steering Committee reporting directly to the Executive. AIHW would provide data management services including regular agreed reports, adhoc analyses as agreed by the Executive. AIHW, under Medical Deans oversight, would also deliver an annual on line student survey to students in their final or penultimate year. Liaison with individual schools would be through the Medical Deans MSOD project manager. Data linkage with the National Health Workforce Dataset and the AHPRA registration data for longitudinal tracking would hopefully begin in 2015 after all governance issues had been addressed.

For questions on any of these issues please do not hesitate to contact myself on jsearle@medicaldeans.org.au or 02 9114 1680 or Professor Alison Jones on admin@medicaldeans.org.au

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