

VMO ESSENTIALS

VMOs in the Public Hospital System: the basics

Q. Who is a Visiting Medical Officer (VMO)?

A. A VMO is a medical practitioner appointed under a service to provide services as a visiting practitioner for monetary remuneration for or on behalf of a Local Health District.

Q. Who is an Honorary Medical Officer (HMO)?

A. An HMO is a medical practitioner appointed under an honorary contract to provide services as a visiting practitioner for or on behalf of a Local Health District. There is no monetary remuneration paid for the provision of services to an HMO.

Q. What is a VMO Service Contract?

A. A service contract is an agreement between the VMO or the VMO's practice company and the LHD which specifies the services to be provided.

Q. Can I contract through a practice company?

A. You may contract through a practice company if you wish to do so.

Q. What are the different kinds of service contracts?

A. There are three types of VMO Contracts: Sessional, Fee-for-Service and Honorary. Under a Sessional Contract a VMO is remunerated by reference to an hourly rate or rates for medical services provided to the Local Health District. Under a Fee-for-Service Contract a VMO is remunerated for medical services provided by

reference to Commonwealth Medicare Benefits Schedule.

An Honorary Contract is a service contract under which the medical practitioner does not receive any monetary compensation for services provided.

Q. Can I be paid at the senior specialist sessional rate?

A. If you have practiced in your specialty for at least seven years, you may apply to be classified and paid as a senior specialist. The application shall be considered within eight weeks. Approval is subject to the VMO being required to render services the adequate performance of which requires a senior specialist.

Q. Should I have a written Service Contract?

A. Yes, you must have a written service contract in place.

Q. What is a TMF Contract of Liability Coverage?

A. VMOs are eligible for Treasury Managed Fund professional indemnity cover when providing services to public patients, and under some arrangements, to private patients. A VMO must sign a VMO service contract and a TMF Contract of Liability Coverage in order to rely on the cover.

Q. How long is a VMO appointment term?

A. A VMO can be appointed under a contract for a term of no longer than 5 years. In exceptional cases, approval may be given for a longer term (up to 10 years).

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Q. What is a quinquennium?

A. Each five year appointment term is commonly referred to as a quinquennium. A VMO may be appointed at the commencement of a quinquennium or during a quinquennium. If appointed during a quinquennium, the VMO will be appointed for the balance of the 5 year term.

Q. What if I want to terminate the contract before the end of the five year term?

A. A service contract can be terminated by providing three months' notice to the Local Health District.

Q. Am I entitled to re-appointment at the end of the appointment term?

A. As a VMO you are eligible for, but not entitled to, re-appointment.

Q. Will my VMO position be advertised at the end of the term?

A. The Chief Executive of the Local Health District has a discretion to reappoint you as a VMO without advertising the position if:

- you have completed a Level 2 review in the penultimate year of your appointment term and your performance is determined to be satisfactory; and
- your role and responsibilities remain largely unchanged since the time of original appointment.

There is no positive obligation on a Local Health District not to advertise.

Q. Can I be temporarily appointed as a VMO?

A. Yes, temporary appointments can be made without the need to advertise the vacancy where the appointment is for a period not exceeding three months. A temporary appointment may be extended for one further single three-month period.

Q: What is a PRNIP agreement?

A. A Privately Referred Non-Inpatient (PRNIP) Agreement is an agreement under which a VMO provides out-patient services to patients and bulk bills those patients for the services provided. The VMO pays a licence fee to the Local Health District under these arrangements. A VMO cannot be required to sign a PRNIP Agreement but may decide to do so.



If you have any questions in relation to this document or the issues raised, please contact our Workplace Relations Team on 02 9439 8822 or email workplace@amansw.com.au