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Comparison of end-of-2011 South Australian Medical Scientist salaries with Queensland Health Practitioners

Background to this comparison:

This comparison refers to the “Health Practitioners’ (Queensland Health) Certified Agreement (No. 2) 2011(HPEB2)”, dated 10 November 2011, described in the attached document from the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

According to this Queensland document (page 1), the Health Practitioners’ agreement was certified by their Commission on 03 November 2011 and shall operate from 03 November 2011 until its nominal expiry on 31 August 2013.

Demonstration of equivalence of professions:

Pages 34 to 36 of this document describe the organisation of their Health Practitioner streams, from HP1 to HP8. Entry points into the scale are described on page 12 under Clause 25. Employees in levels HP1 to HP7 are eligible to increment in accordance with the Award while appointments to the HP8 classification level will be by advertisement and merit selection processes.

Subsequent pages describe the details of what work and training levels are expected at each level. Page 39 states that “Classification at HP1 level is reserved exclusively for employees in the process of completing prerequisite educational or training requirements for positions housed under HP2 or HP3 classification levels.” Page 39 also describes the HP2 level being for “recently qualified and developing technical staff” – this would be the equivalent of Technical Officer positions in SA.

On page 40, it describes “Positions at HP3 Level require employees to hold at least a Tertiary Degree (or equivalent) qualification” and “HP3 covers both newly qualified clinicians and developing professional clinicians.” This is therefore comparable to MeS1 and MeS2 levels in South Australia.

Comparison of salaries:

Page 53 holds the Queensland HP Schedule of Wages, which describes in the middle column the remuneration for “Wage rates payable from 1 September 2011” – a current time period. The starting annual salary for a HP3 is \$55,328 and there are eight steps or increments up to \$83,859.

Perhaps, since we are negotiating in 2012, we should observe the next column of “Wage rates payable from 1 September 2012”, where the annual salary increments are in the range \$56,987 to \$86,374 – this would be what to aim for in South Australia from 1st July 2012 to achieve parity with Queensland HP3s. But let’s go easy and just look at what Queensland HPs would have already had for the previous 10 months instead....

The comparable South Australian Medical Scientist (or GFS) rates for MeS1 through the “soft bar” to the top of MeS2 for the equivalent current time period (“First full pay period on or after 1/10/2011”) are the classification MeS1 (for a 3 year degree graduate) starting at \$52,535 with a total of ten steps to the top of MeS2 at \$78,802. The Queensland rates are an average of almost 10 percent above these SA rates.

There exists a further single step in South Australia for an MeS2 to aspire to if they are considered a leader or authority in their field of expertise, nominated as the “scientific excellence” scale of \$85,006 per annum. It is unknown at present as to what percentage of MeS2 have attained this level of remuneration, but it is understood that scientific excellence is reviewed every three years to ensure that the required standard is maintained. For all other MeS2, the substantive top of the MeS2 scale in SA from October 2011 is effectively set at \$78,802.

If one chooses to describe the pay by number of years since graduation, one gets the following comparison for the same time period (again ignoring the increment that Queensland HP will automatically receive in September 2012 – a mere two months after the start of any new SA rates):

<i>First year MeS1 (SA)</i>	<i>\$52,535</i>	<i>Queensland HP3-0</i>	<i>\$55,328 (+ 5.32%)</i>
<i>Fourth year MeS1 (SA)</i>	<i>\$60,892</i>	<i>Queensland HP3-4</i>	<i>\$68,450 (+12.41%)</i>
<i>Eighth year = MeS2 level 3</i>	<i>\$73,131</i>	<i>Queensland HP3-7</i>	<i>\$81,320 (+11.20%)</i>
<i>Ninth year = MeS2 level 3</i>	<i>\$75,817</i>	<i>Queensland HP3-8</i>	<i>\$83,859 (=the top of HP3)</i>
<i>Tenth year = MeS2 level 5</i>	<i>\$78,802</i>	<i>Q'land, at \$83,859 is a year's pay ahead of SA.</i>	

Let us continue the scale, assuming that the equivalent scientist in Queensland has now applied for the next increment to HP4 (controlled by interview and merit), where their work is described as having a “clinical, education or research focus, or may involve elements of all three” (page 41). HP4 positions are arguably equivalent to MeS3 in SA.

<i>First year MeS3 (SA)</i>	<i>\$81,190</i>	<i>Queensland HP4-1</i>	<i>\$89,703 (+10.49%)</i>
<i>Third year MeS3 (SA)</i>	<i>\$86,563</i>	<i>Queensland HP4-3</i>	<i>\$93,963 (+ 8.55%)</i>

There is no equivalent 4th salary level provided in MeS3 salary scale whereas the Queensland salary scale for HP4 includes automatic progression to HP4-4 (\$96,523), a discrepancy of +11.5% assuming the normal progression of a senior medical scientist after 3 years in this position in Queensland in comparison to SA. There exists a further “scientific excellence” MeS3 level in SA of \$91,508 per annum, but again, this is not automatically achieved, only by the highest performers. For all other MeS3, the substantive top of the MeS3 scale in SA from October 2011 is effectively \$86,563 - almost \$10,000 below the automatic Queensland top!

Comparison of the higher grade levels' salaries:

There are four yearly increments (plus excellence) scales in SA for both MeS4 and MeS5 with two discrete MeS6A and 6B levels available, with a current maximum achievable Medical Scientist salary in SA of \$129,499.

In Queensland, there are another potential six increments through HP5 to 7 available, with a maximum achievable salary of \$138,015 before we get to the levels of HP8 classification which are appointed following advertisement and merit selection processes, with a maximum achievable salary of \$174,926.

It seems that, at all levels of description, a Medical Scientist / Health Practitioner in Queensland is working at a salary that is far higher than the equivalent person in South Australia and with far higher salary levels achievable through promotion. To illustrate that other aspects of the two states' career structures are equivalent, it is seen that the Queensland agreement also has salary sacrifice as an accepted entitlement, in line with the SA agreement (see page 13, Section 31, Queensland agreement).

For this reason, it would be logical to suggest that the new pay scales for Medical Scientists in SA should seek to be increased by *more than the CPI*. An average of 10 to 13 percent would bring SA in line with the equivalent pay scales that Queensland HP have already had for the last ten months at the lower salary levels, and arguably, an average increase of at least 28 to 42 percent (average 35.6) is required to bring the upper salary levels into equivalence (please see the following table).

Table: Comparison of end-of-2011 South Australian MeS salaries with Queensland Health Practitioners.

SA Classifications			Queensland Classifications			Percentage above SA MeS
SA MeS	SA GFS					
Salary from 1 Oct. 2011			Salary from 1 Sept. 2011			
MeS1	\$52,535	\$52,535	HP 3	0	55,328	5.32
	\$54,923	\$54,923		1	60,616	10.37
	\$57,311	\$57,311		2	64,261	12.13
	\$60,892	\$60,892		3	68,450	12.41
	\$64,475	\$64,475		4	71,104	10.28
MeS2	\$68,056	\$68,056		5	74,292	9.16
	\$70,443	\$70,443		6	77,467	9.97
	\$73,131	\$73,131		7	81,320	11.20
	\$75,817	\$75,817		8	83,859	10.61
	\$78,802	\$78,802		#	83,859	6.42
excellence	\$85,006	No equivalent to SA				
# = set Qld pay to top of HP3						Average 9.79 %
MeS3	\$81,190	\$81,190	HP 4	1	89,703	10.49
	\$83,579	\$83,579		2	91,571	9.56
	\$86,563	\$86,563		3	93,963	8.55
	No equivalent to QLD			4	96,523	11.51
excellence	\$91,508	No equivalent to SA				
MeS4	\$89,548	\$89,548	HP 5	1	101,477	13.32
	\$91,935	\$91,935		2	105,881	15.17
	\$94,623	\$94,623	HP 6	1	113,058	19.48
	\$97,905	\$97,905		2	117,031	19.54
	excellence	\$103,772	No equivalent to SA			
MeS5	\$100,293	\$100,293	HP 7	1	128,785	28.41
	\$102,680	\$102,680		2	138,015	34.41
	\$106,243	\$106,243	HP 8	1	143,019	34.61
	\$109,845	\$109,845		2	149,030	35.67
				3	155,803	41.84
excellence	\$115,593	No equivalent to SA				
MeS6A	\$120,612	\$120,612		4	167,887	39.20
MeS6B	\$129,499	\$129,499		5	174,926	35.08
						Average 35.60 %