

A copy of the open letter to ACEM CEO and Board, as it was on 22/11/23.

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Letter to ACEM CEO and Board

Dear Ms Wooden and Australasian College of Emergency Medicine Board,

It is our understanding that on 17th November you withdrew the invitation to Dr Thurtle to speak at the upcoming ACEM ASM as a keynote with 5 days notice.

This offer was revoked because pre-recorded versions of the talks were shared with you without the permission of Dr Thurtle. You then elected to put these recordings through a review process including senior ACEM members, without informing Dr Thurtle about the process. This ad hoc review has deemed the talks 'too political' for an ACEM conference.

Specifically, the feedback to Dr Thurtle was that "the activities of the College are bound by the constitution and the regulations, and are guided by our strategic plan. While we do take an active interest in social and political factors that directly impact on presentations to emergency departments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, we are not in a position to take a public position on international conflicts, and do not comment on international matters outside our formal global emergency care partnerships."

No other speakers to our knowledge have been required to have their talks reviewed and this happened solely because access to the pre-recorded versions was available, rather than being an equitable process for all speakers.

The pre-recorded material relates to two talks, one on people under pressure referencing Dr Thurtle's reflections on successfully managing complex occupational trauma amid her direct experiences in Palestine, with no political commentary except for a brief history of the genesis of the Gaza strip which was qualified, and a comment about the known failure of humanitarian law to protect against atrocities. The second shorter talk was on Australia's offshore refugee population, referencing Dr Thurtle's experiences working with that population. Dr Thurtle makes it very clear that she does not represent any entity and that her opinions are her own.

Dr Thurtle was given complete creative control of these talks by the organising committee, and the organising committee were aware of the content of the talks.

There are plenty of examples of talks referencing world events including conflict that have been given at ACEM conferences, including in the past by Dr Thurtle, and including the topic of offshore refugees (Hobart 2019). However, it is the first time that Dr Thurtle was planning to speak about Palestine at an ACEM event.

We are concerned that ACEM is attempting to censor content that references provision of medical care in Palestine by suggesting this is political. This is not in line with ACEM's stated values, and is not in line with the values of ACEM members and colleagues involved in emergency care.

We request that a platform be returned to Dr Thurtle to present virtually on both topics without censorship, and that very specific feedback regarding the content of concern is provided so that it may be considered. Dr Thurtle cannot be present in person as she is currently on assignment in Palestine.

Yours sincerely,

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\* Indicates required question

Name\*

Your answer

ACEM ID / Professional Affiliation (ACRRM, MSF, RCEM etc.)\*

Your answer. Submit. Clear form