We are owned by our Australian doctor members and run purely for their benefit. That’s why we say:

**by doctors for doctors**

Avant has a proud heritage of protecting the Australian medical profession that spans over 120 years.

Established by a small group of doctors as a mutual in 1893, Avant is now Australia’s leading medical defence organisation, representing 75,500 healthcare practitioners and students across every state and territory. We’re here for the long term.

We remain a mutual organisation, serving our members, not shareholders, ensuring our members will always be at the heart of everything we do.

**Our vision**
To be a trusted protector and advisor, professionally and personally.

**Our mission**
To support members so they can practise good medicine and achieve their goals.
We put our members first – always

For our members
• defend reputations and registrations
• advise and help members manage their risks
• support the practice of good medicine

For the medical profession
• protect its reputation
• establish fair boundaries for doctors’ responsibilities
• communicate emerging risks and trends

For the healthcare system
• inform debate for improved healthcare
• provide a credible, respected voice

For members’ families
• exclusive and tailored protection for doctors and their families
• financial advice from someone you trust

For members’ practices
• simpler, safer and more efficient systems and processes
• protection for the business and its staff

Our strategy

Excellence: We strive to serve members and support them when and where they need us. We base our actions on a deep understanding of doctors and the environment in which they practise. We never take members’ trust for granted.

Growth: We wish to responsibly grow for our members’ benefit, providing greater scale economies, diversification, efficiency and ability to influence debate.

Stability: Long-term security for our members and the wider community is our priority. We will be prudent but commercially sound, providing competitive products with stable premiums, supported by strong organisational risk management.
2017 has been another great year for Avant. A minor but significant change has been the new addition to our logo, by doctors for doctors - a reminder to all of who we are. We are owned by our members and run purely for your benefit, today and in the longer term.

Our primary focus is of course to defend and support our members who may experience a wide range of stressful adverse events including complaints, litigation, investigations, employment and training disputes, and a range of other negative experiences that distract them from their crucial clinical work. We are disappointed that the government has withdrawn some of the support it offers the medical community through the High Cost Claims Scheme. This scheme has supported stability in medical indemnity premiums for many years and should be retained. Avant has been vocal in championing the retention of the scheme, and will take a central role in any further review of indemnity support initiatives.

At Avant, we have sophisticated databases to analyse the nature and frequency of claims, and the most experienced claims managers and legal advisors. In the past year Avant has received two global awards for best medical indemnity insurance law firm. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the team in both advising and defending members against complaints and litigation, and for their support and compassion while doing so.

Having the very best experts to rely on is increasingly important as community expectations of our members continue to rise. The professional standards that doctors are judged against are regularly reviewed and raised. As a mutual, we support our members to meet those standards by sharing our insights and knowledge as Australia’s largest medical defence organisation, through written materials, personal advice and group presentations.

Avant has supported medical colleges, societies and associations for many years; much of our work is focussed on joint activities to improve quality, safety and professionalism in the delivery of healthcare. This benefits patients as well as doctors and ultimately, will help keep premiums down. In the last year we launched the Avant Quality Improvement Grants program, which provides support to members who invest in activities that improve quality.

A further initiative in 2017 has been the establishment of the Avant Foundation. This will allow us to focus our research and education support on activities that will provide the greatest benefit to our members, and to the Australian communities they serve.

A key strength of Avant is its governance structure, whereby our member directors are responsible for setting the culture for the organisation and ensuring that we stay entirely focussed on remaining a doctors’ organisation. We rely on the breadth and balance of skills that our member directors bring to the boardroom, so I encourage members to engage in our election process this year by voting.

Finally, thank you to all members for your ongoing support and feedback. The positive regard in which our organisation is held by members contrasts with many other organisations, and provides a constant incentive to maintain our standards of service.

Prof Simon Willcock
Chairman
CEO’s report

At Avant we remain absolutely focused on being the best we can at advising, supporting, protecting and defending you, our members.

Members are requiring more support services than ever. 2016-17 saw 20,000 phone calls into our Medico-legal Advisory Service, nearly double what it was a few years ago and 8,500 notifications of new, actual or potential claims being made against our members.

This year, as last year, saw higher levels of civil litigation against doctors than has been seen for many years. Fortunately, from a financial perspective, good investment performance more than compensated for the heavier civil claims environment. However, we need to be cautious given the historical volatility of the medical indemnity environment and investment returns.

We are disappointed that the Federal Government is reviewing the medical indemnity schemes that have helped keep the sector stable over the last decade.

Our growth was strong in 2016-17, with more than 6,700 new members taking out medical indemnity protection with Avant. We now provide indemnity cover to 75,500 healthcare professionals and medical students.

One part of Avant we are really proud of is Avant Law, our own law firm solely dedicated to health law and Avant members. Avant Law has some of the best health law solicitors in the country.

We continue to prudently operate the organisation. Our accounts demonstrate that we are maintaining a level of net assets of over $1 billion. Net assets represent the monies we hold in addition to what we believe we need to meet all of our expected financial commitments. It equates to nearly $20,000 of additional financial strength per Avant voting member – a very significant level of financial security indeed. This puts us in a position of unparalleled financial strength compared to other Australian medical defence organisation.

As the needs of our members evolve, so do our services. 2017 has seen us introduce yet more services, products and educational resources to support our members. For practice owners, we deployed business insurance, which provides cover for unforeseen events such as fire, storm, accidental or malicious damage. We launched PracticeHub, an online platform to assist practices manage their processes and documents. We introduced a range of life insurance and income protection products specifically designed for doctors, which have received a tremendous response.

The Doctors’ Health Fund is doing very well. It continues to be one of the fastest growing health funds in Australia, with its distinctive high quality products and services tailored to the needs of the medical community. Our travel insurance product also remains very popular.

I’d like to thank all members who responded to our feedback surveys. It really helps us make sure we have our service right for you. Pleasingly, satisfaction was again stronger in 2017.

I would also like to acknowledge the more than 100 members who contribute to Avant as part of our various committees, councils and member groups. Your input allows our staff to maintain a strong understanding and connection with our broad membership across the country.

And finally I would like to acknowledge the calibre of the Avant people and their commitment to supporting our members. It is only through their work that we can support members in the way that we do.

Thank you for your continued support and for choosing Avant to protect you.

Andrew Boldeman
Chief Executive Officer
Delivering more for members

As a mutual, our focus is on working in our members’ interests, providing peace of mind so they can practise confidently, knowing we have them covered. Over the last financial year (FY17), we are proud to have successfully delivered services to protect members’ reputations and assets, while supporting the profession and maintaining financial strength and security.

75,500
We’re protecting more healthcare practitioners and students than ever before

20,000
calls to the Medico-legal Advisory Service – an increase of 13% on FY16

98%
overall satisfaction with Avant membership reported in the Annual Member Survey

$1.1bn
Avant Mutual Group net assets

8,500
member claims and notifications managed by Avant Medical Defence Services

$360m
in assets notionally contributed to the Retirement Reward Plan

35,000
persons covered under Doctors’ Health Fund

New
business insurance products launched for practice owners

7,900
members purchased Avant Travel Insurance cover with 89% renewing
New
life insurance products launched

2,000
practices protected by our Practice Medical Indemnity Policy

30+
professional bodies supported

$720,000
in support of medical colleges, societies and associations

35,000
members eligible for the Loyalty Reward Plan

7,000
members notified us of an incident

Dr James Aridas
Obstetrics and Gynaecology Registrar
Victoria
Avant member since 2016
‘I have confidence that I’m going to be looked after because Avant is the largest medical defence organisation in Australia, that’s run by doctors who are looking out for doctors.’

Dr Michael Challis
Anaesthetist
Tasmania
Avant member since 2011
**Strong asset position**

Avant has greater net assets than any other MDO, which means more assets to invest for the benefit of our members.

**Financial security assured**

Our financial strength and size continue to allow us to provide secure and comprehensive insurance as well as increasing benefits. Avant has over $1.1 billion in net assets, larger than any other medical indemnity provider, giving you the confidence that we will be there over the long term to provide the services you need when you need them most.

Avant’s net assets per member have remained stable at around $19,000 since 2013. Solid profitability over the last few years has been returned to members through the Retirement Reward Plan, investments in member benefits and in improving the practice of medicine.

**Growth from diversification**

Revenue continued to grow strongly in FY17. Membership of our medical indemnity organisation grew by 5% and Doctors’ Health Fund membership grew in excess of 10%.

Developing new products is good for members as it protects our business when medical indemnity is facing more difficult times. It also provides good quality products tailored for our membership as a whole, more easily than they can access individually.

Revenue streams from non-practitioner products comprised 30% of group revenue in FY17.

**Multi-layered capital strength**

Total assets increased $119 million this year to $2.15 billion. Our asset portfolio provides three layers of protection to members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Layer 1</td>
<td>$1,258m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance capital: Funds to cover claims commitments in accordance with the regulatory capital requirements, plus additional capital to provide a high level of security to members.</td>
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| Layer 2 | $105m |
| Additional reserves for extra security: Recognising the uncertainties and volatility of the Australian medical indemnity sector, Avant’s board chooses to hold an additional level of reserves under guarantee outside of Avant’s insurance entities. |

| Layer 3 | $783m |
| Other capital reserves: Assets held to provide additional reserves and to support initiatives. A portion of these assets support the Retirement Reward Plan (RRP) while simultaneously representing our final layer of security for members. |

**$19,000 in net assets per voting member**

**30% of revenues from non-indemnity product**
Indemnity claims payments higher in 2016-17

The group’s results from indemnity insurance operations were dampened during the period due to a hardening of the claims environment, tighter regulatory environment and low ongoing interest rates.

Insurance business financial results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY17</th>
<th>FY16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross earned revenue</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levies and taxes</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims expense</td>
<td>(232)</td>
<td>(206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration expenses</td>
<td>(72)</td>
<td>(71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance surplus</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY17</th>
<th>FY16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claims ratio</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration expense ratio</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined ratio</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Claims frequency higher

During 2017, Avant continued to see higher claims frequency across our portfolio. The last year saw higher civil litigation against doctors than was prevalent over the prior five years. Reported new civil litigation claims rose 24% when compared with 2014-15.

A steady year-on-year increase in patient complaints to regulatory bodies and a tightening regulatory environment are leading to a growing importance of disciplinary claims defence for our doctors. AHPRA reports nationally, for the year to 2015/16 that 5% of registered medical practitioners were the subject of a notification compared with 1.5% of all registered healthcare practitioners.

Combating this through member education and advisory programs to protect and support our members and advocacy for appropriate regulation has been a particular focus in 2017.

Government reduces support for medical indemnity schemes

The Federal Government introduced the medical indemnity suite of legislation along with the High Cost Claims Scheme (HCCS) and other schemes in 2002/03 to increase the financial security and affordability of medical indemnity providers, and put in place special rights and protections for medical practitioners during periods of instability.

As a result of increased stability of the medical indemnity sector and the rising cost of healthcare, the Federal Government is reviewing and altering these schemes. Beginning 1 July 2018, the threshold for recoveries under the HCCS has been increased from $300,000 to $500,000.

In Victoria, the Amendment to the Wrongs Act has reduced the threshold for psychiatric injury, leading to more available resources for patients who have unfortunately been impacted by a practitioner’s actions, leading to injury.

Doctors’ Health Fund

Doctors’ Health Fund claims experience was again better than expected primarily for hospital payments. Lower rate increases than the industry average continues to reflect this experience.

Interest rates remain at historical lows

Our layer 1 insurance assets comprise over $800 million in investment grade interest rate sensitive bonds and cash. Income from these assets assists in covering the cost of future claims. While there was a slight increase in long-term yields during the period they remain at historically low levels.

Australian interest rate trends

![Australian interest rate trends chart](chart-url)
Sharing in the success
As a mutual, when we make profits we share these with you, our members and with the medical profession.

Avant aims to support all members and share the financial benefits of our strong operating outcomes and expertise with new, practising and retiring members.

This year the Board continued to support the Loyalty Reward Plan with $23 million in rebates provided against premiums. A total of $8 million of Retirement Reward Plan dividend payments have been approved for members retiring from practice during FY17. In addition, Avant invested $5 million of group operating profits in education, research and advocacy to support the quality, safety and professionalism in the practice of medicine.

Over the past five years, Avant has been able to distribute $153 million to members, including $36 million in FY17.

Loyalty Reward Plan continues
Most doctors will remain Avant members for many years, even decades. The Loyalty Reward Plan is our way of saying ‘thank you’ to members for their loyalty.

Under this plan, when our financial performance is strong, we share this success with eligible members via a rebate against their premium, depending on their length of tenure with Avant.

All members paying a medical indemnity insurance premium are eligible, other than those under a corporate group arrangement. Membership years as an intern, RMO or doctor in training count for tenure calculations.

In FY17, the Loyalty Reward Plan saved 35,000 members a total of $23 million in premium payments. We are pleased to announce a continuation of the plan for 2018 renewals, which will see rebates of up to 12% from members’ insurance premiums.

More Retirement Reward Plan dividends
Established in 2014, the Retirement Reward Plan is the second major way we share our financial success with members. The plan gives Avant the ability to return surplus capital to eligible members by way of a dividend when they permanently retire from medical practice.

Over 41,000 members now have a notional balance under the plan, which can be viewed in our member portal. In total, Avant has notionally contributed $360 million into the plan, including a further $21 million in FY17.

Since 2015, we have paid $22 million to members who retired from practice.

Support for the medical profession
Each year we invest a portion of the financial surplus that arises into activities that benefit the broader medical profession and the Australian healthcare system. We seek to wisely leverage our unique position as Australia’s largest medical defence organisation to support initiatives that improve the quality, safety and professionalism of healthcare.

Our contribution comes in the form of advocating for improvements in systems, support for medical associations, colleges and societies, funding research into quality, safety and professionalism, and sharing learnings from our medico-legal experiences.

The Retirement Reward Plan reflects the current policy of the Board for determining which members of Avant are eligible to participate in the Retirement Reward Plan and any Retirement Reward Dividends declared by Avant. The Retirement Reward Plan is entirely at the discretion of the Board and no member will be eligible to receive a Retirement Reward Dividend until such time as the Board declares a dividend in favour of that member. The Retirement Reward Plan is subject to change, suspension or termination by the Board at any time.
‘Avant is the largest medical defence organisation in Australia which gives me a sense of security that Avant is always going to be able to cover me and back me up.’

Dr John Limbers
Orthopaedic Surgeon
New South Wales
Avant member since 1994
Experience when it matters most

In FY17, nearly 7,000 members notified us of an incident. Should you find yourself in an adverse situation, our multi-skilled team of medico-legal experts are here.

Number of claims handled is increasing

Over the last three years, we have seen a growth in claims double that of the growth in our membership. In FY17, nearly 7,000 members contacted us to notify an incident on a broad range of matters. Feedback from our members tells us they benefit greatly from our extensive experience over many years in handling these issues.

Our members face a wide range of issues

% new claims in FY17

- Complaint against doctor: 11%
- Compensation claim: 13%
- Coronial inquiries: 6%
- Employment dispute: 3%
- Medicare investigation: 50%
- Other: 4%

Complaints against doctors drive claims growth

Claims per 1,000 members

We saw another increase in the frequency of complaints made against doctors, which make up 50% of all claims we handle. In most cases, no further action is taken by the regulators aided by our support and sound defence.

Achieving the best outcomes

No doctor wants to have to call on our defence service but it is becoming increasingly likely. While these instances are new for many doctors, our claims team has a wealth of experience to draw on to support members. In seeking the best outcome for the member, we work to minimise the impact on them, to successfully defend them, and to have complaints withdrawn. This year members we defended gave us a satisfaction rating of 95%.

A personalised defence team

Receiving a complaint can affect doctors’ professional and personal wellbeing. Avant provides a personalised supportive service for members. Each member is assigned a claims manager as their dedicated contact, who assemble the multi-disciplinary team of experts best suited to the circumstances.

Peer support always on hand

When faced with a claim, often a doctor would rather speak with a peer about their circumstances. That’s why every claim has a medical advisor. Avant is large enough to have extensive resources, including the clinical experience of 20 doctors across the states and specialities, who can support any medico-legal issue. When a member meets with their claims manager and solicitor, a medical advisor is there as a colleague who can interpret the medical jargon and records. This knowledge can have a significant impact on the strategy used for a claim, particularly when combined with years of Avant’s medico-legal experience.

‘Every person that I spoke with regarding this claim was friendly, supportive and knowledgeable.’

Avant member feedback
A multi-disciplinary defence team

From the first query to the court room, Avant has assembled a multi-disciplinary defence team dedicated to you, our members. You can be assured we have the expertise and experience you need – when you need it. Our team consists of solicitors, doctors and claims managers dedicated to supporting only Avant members.

Avant’s extensive team of experts protecting and advising members

Avant Law
Medico-legal expertise across every relevant matter of law, in every state and territory.

Pamela Michael
BHSc (Nursing), LLB
Head of Avant Law, National Legal Director

Claims managers
Local support through the claims process, advising and coordinating defence resources.

Elena Petrou
BA, LLB/LP
Claims Manager, SA

Medical-legal Advisory Service
Expert advice whenever you need it, 24/7 in emergencies.

Martin Botros
LLB, LLM (Health Law), B Physio, Grad Dip Legal Practice, Grad Dip Conflict Resolution
Medico-legal Advisor, VIC

Advocacy
Representing members’ interests to regulators and policy makers to improve the health system.

Georgie Haysom
BSc LLB (Hons), LLM (Bioethics), GAICD
Head of Advocacy, NSW

Medical expert committees
Over 70 practitioners across states and specialties.

Dr Lewis Macken
MBBCh, DCH, DRCOG, FRACGP, FACRRM
Chair, NSW Medical Experts Committee

Risk Advisory Service
On-the-ground support to develop risk mitigation strategies.

Annabel Herron
BSc, RN
Risk Advisor, QLD

Practical advice

Risk Advisors

Doctor’s perspective

20 on staff

First line of support

Avant Member

Medical experts
Committees and panels

Specialist defence expertise
Avant Law

Claims experience
State claims teams

Advocating for a better regulatory environment

Avant’s extensive team of experts protecting and advising members

Medical advisors
18 state-based doctors providing peer support and medico-legal advice.

Dr Frank Jones
MBBCh, DCH, DRCOG, FRACGP, FACRRM
Senior Medical Advisor, WA
National strength, local expertise

Defending doctors is part of our DNA. With the increased likelihood of a complaint or investigation, we continue to invest in the best medical defence team to protect members.

More experts to defend you

Demand for our services is increasing so, in response, we have further invested in our medico-legal team across Australia. In FY17, we expanded our team of Avant Law solicitors from 47 to 56. In total, our defence team has more than 140 staff.

Increased local legal expertise

Every state has its own laws, issues and nuances. Having solicitors, medical advisors and claims managers operating across state and territory offices ensures a deep understanding of local matters and regulators, and provides on-the-ground support. This is why we extended our network of local offices, opening one in Canberra last September to support ACT members. Local teams are able to draw upon a network of Avant medico-legal specialists across the country, which together provide the best support and advice to members.

‘It gave me great confidence knowing I was being backed up by approachable experts. Now I know why I have been paying my money for over 45 years!’

Avant member feedback

Avant Law - your award-winning defence team

Avant established Australia’s only specialist medico-legal practice in 2009, when it recognised that its members’ interests were best served by our own dedicated law firm. Avant Law has grown to be the largest specialist medico-legal law firm in Australia. We work exclusively for Avant members. In representing over half of all doctors in Australia, we handle an extensive range and volume of medico-legal matters across the country.

Our size and scope of work have allowed us to attract the very best medico-legal experts, across every relevant matter of law and jurisdiction. Because Avant Law is owned by the people it represents, it differs from a traditional legal firm – our solicitors work exclusively on medico-legal matters for Avant members.

Avant Law won Global 100 2017 Best Medical Indemnity Insurance Specialist – Australia and ACQ5 Global Awards 2017 Medical Indemnity Insurance Law Firm of the Year.
Trusted advice
24/7

Available 24/7 in emergencies, our Medico-legal Advisory Service has experts on hand for personalised support to help minimise the chance of a complaint or claim occurring, or just offer a reassuring ear.

Avant advisors across the country

In the complex world of healthcare delivery, even the most seasoned medical professional can find themselves in a new and challenging situation. The Medico-legal Advisory Service is staffed by our own team of more than 70 medical advisors, solicitors and claims managers across our state offices. In FY17, we increased resources to provide members with expert, personalised support.

Calls can be directed to an Avant medical advisor for much-needed peer support. And because provision of healthcare is not confined to usual business hours, in emergencies, our experts are available out-of-hours, so you can get advice when it’s urgently needed.

Supporting practitioners and their practices

One in four of Avant’s medical practitioner members called us for immediate advice on managing an adverse situation last year. In total, our advisory service received over 20,000 calls from doctors and practice staff seeking medico-legal advice in FY17 – an increase of 13% on FY16.

‘When I have contacted Avant for advice, they have been very prompt and helpful in giving advice and making timely recommendations. This has relieved me of unnecessary stress and confusion, and guided me to positive outcomes.’

Avant member feedback

Calls from practices and registrars increased considerably over the last year. This reflects the changing environment our members work in, and highlights the increasing complexity in the delivery of healthcare. Calls relating to employment matters (+34%) and confidentiality (+32%) were two of the fastest growing topics for advice.

‘The person who took my call was very calm and caring, and took the time to hear my story. Talking through the situation out loud really helped put it into perspective.’

Avant member feedback

Issues our members called us about in FY17:
Advisory services promoting safe practice

Our informative, evidence-based advice materials and on-the-ground risk advisors enable members to make informed decisions to practise safely.

Evidence-based insights
Our growing membership means Avant sees evidence of emerging risks early and we provide this information to our members. Our current claims coding project uses an extensive database of medico-legal claims, notifications and doctors, to provide deeper insights, which we then develop into resources for our members. In FY17, we added 80 new informative resource materials based on our claims experience.

Advice at your fingertips
Help is available to members not only through our 24/7 phone line, but also via our website or by talking one-on-one with our risk advisors.

Content developed by our medico-legal and education team draws on our extensive data from previous claims. You can find information across a range of common topics in many formats, the most popular being our fact sheets on our website, visit avant.org.au/mlas. Fact sheets produced over the last year include advice about:

- providing medical records to a third party
- prescribing drugs of dependence
- discharge from day surgery
- FAQs for doctors leaving a practice
- understanding contractor/service agreements
- when requested to attend an employment interview.

Tailored to your practice
Our Risk Advisory team provided almost 750 services to members in FY17. These included visits to practices around the country, interactive assessment and presentations and telephone discussions.

Our team is spread across states and includes doctors as well as other health professionals, with backgrounds in nursing, practice management, law, quality and safety, and clinical education.

Risk advisors often visit members with multiple claims and help them develop education and management plans to address areas of risk and improve their practice.

It is Avant’s experience that regulatory bodies take a positive view of doctors who are proactive and undertake a risk education program. This also reduces claims costs, which benefits Avant’s wider membership.

‘I speak very highly of your advice and knowledge however it was your empathy and understanding that I appreciated the most.’
Avant member feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>750</th>
<th>Risk Advisory services provided</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>attendees at live education sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>page views of advisory/information content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250+</td>
<td>advisory/information materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>new items added to advice/education web pages (e.g. fact sheets)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dr Nicole Leeks
Orthopaedic Surgeon
Western Australia
Avant member since 2015

‘I appreciate the local support and the genuine concern of Avant’s staff members for me as an individual. I have great faith in Avant’s in-house legal team and have been impressed by their timely and reassuring responses.’
Comprehensive cover and support

Avant continues to protect doctors’ reputations with comprehensive cover that adapts to Australia’s evolving healthcare environment. Our members are supported by local teams who understand the nuances of medical practice and law in their state or territory.

Improved cover

In 2017, we introduced additional cover to reflect recent changes to the Privacy Act. We recognise that this is a big change for our members and can also increase the risk of potential privacy breach claims, so we have made changes to our policy so that we now cover the payment of fines and penalties relating to a breach of privacy, including data breaches. This is to ensure members continue to feel confident they’re fully covered for what they need cover for.

Avant has also established the highest sub-limits for increasingly common issues doctors face, such as employment disputes, pursuing defamation claims, reporting child abuse and the contraction of communicable diseases.

And with so many members, no one has more experience in the Australian medical indemnity market than Avant to be able to price according to underlying risk. This has enabled us to keep premiums stable over the long-term and ensure that individual circumstances are taken into consideration when pricing policies.

More than insurance

An Avant practitioner indemnity policy includes so much more than insurance that pays out. Every day our 24/7 Medico-legal Advisory Service helps members avoid complaints and claims. They are backed by an award winning defence team and medical advisors, to provide practical and informed advice. Our numerous support programs including risk education webinars, resources and articles, and scholarships and grants programs, are all integral parts of the total protection we offer in preventing and responding to member claims.

Protecting more doctors

More than 6,700 new members chose to trust Avant for their medical indemnity protection in FY17, in addition to the many thousands of existing practitioners. Avant now provides indemnity cover for more than 75,500 healthcare professionals and medical students.

Rewarding loyalty

Most doctors will remain Avant members for many years, even decades. The Avant Loyalty Reward Plan is our way of saying ‘thank you’ to members for their loyalty. When our financial performance is strong, we share this success with eligible members through a rebate towards their premium the following year, depending on their length of individual tenure with Avant.

In FY17, the Loyalty Reward Plan saved members a total of $23 million in premium payments. We are pleased to announce a continuation of the plan in 2018.

‘Avant provides a great balance between being large enough to provide the protection I need yet personal enough to make me feel supported.’

Avant member feedback

*Not all members are eligible for a LRP reward. Members not eligible include medical students, interns, RMOs and DITs and members who have their professional indemnity policy purchased on their behalf under a corporate group arrangement. However, membership years as an intern, RMO or DIT will be included in tenure calculations. The provision of an LRP reward will be determined by the Avant Insurance Board’s annual assessment of the quality of Avant’s financial performance.

Emerging issues in 2017, for which Avant offers protection

- privacy breaches including fines and penalties
- telehealth services for overseas patients
- doctor rating websites and social media comments
- AHPRA investigations into advertising breaches

$23m

saved in premium payments through the Loyalty Reward Plan

7,000

members requiring protection under our policy
Your practice is in safe hands

‘Every time I have reached out for help, Avant has been there to guide me. I’ve always had a positive experience and that’s why I would always recommend Avant.’

Dr Sofia Ambreen
Hills Family General Practice
New South Wales
Practice policy holder since 2011
Protection for your business

As Australia’s largest doctor-owned mutual, every day we see the ever increasing complexities our members face in running a successful practice.

In response to the growing demands in running a practice, in 2017 we have expanded our suite of practice products and services that all work together to make running a practice easier, safer and more efficient.

New Avant Business Insurance

When three in five members told us that they’d consider commercial insurance from Avant, we launched Avant Business Insurance. It has been designed to compliment our practitioner and our practice medical indemnity policies, with no gaps. It ensures that medical practices have the right insurance they need to run a practice – and nothing they don’t.

Our product covers:
• material damage cover for the practice’s property
• business interruption for loss of revenue, income or profit
• public liability
• management liability
• the ability to tailor the policy to the unique needs of the practice with cover for things such as glass insurance, theft and money, electronic equipment, transit, machinery breakdown, general property and commercial motor insurance.

Increased practice cover

Over the last financial year, we expanded the scope of our cover. This included changes to our public liability optional cover as well as expanding our employee disputes cover to include disputes with medical practitioners.

New cover for key staff

Your business is dependent on the billings you, other partners and key practitioners generate. Covering the cost of running your practice if you or key staff are ill, injured or die is an important consideration. In 2017 we launched Practice Expense Cover and Life Cover to further protect your business and enable it to continue if income is restricted due to these circumstances.

Growing demand for expert advice

As a trusted advisor to thousands of doctors, a key benefit for all practice policy holders and their staff is unlimited access to our solicitors through Avant’s Medico-legal Advisory Service. Policy holders and practice staff increasingly benefit from this immediate expert advice, with a 35% increase in calls from practices during the last financial year. Employment disputes and privacy issues are common areas where advice is sought for medical practices.

‘We bundled business insurance in with our Avant practice cover to give peace of mind and making the whole process so much easier.’

MyClinic Group, VIC

*IMPORTANT: The Practice Medical Indemnity Policy is issued by Avant Insurance Limited, ABN 82 003 707 471, AFSL 238 765. This policy is available at www.avant.org.au or by contacting us on 1800 128 268. Practices need to consider other forms of insurance including directors’ and officers’ liability, public and products liability, property and business interruption insurance, and workers compensation.

*IMPORTANT: Avant Insurance Limited ABN 82 003 707 471, AFSL 238 765 arranges Avant Business Insurance as agent of the insurer Allianz Australia Insurance Limited ABN 15 000 122 850, AFSL 234 708. The information provided here is general advice only. You should consider the appropriateness of the advice having regard to your own objectives, financial situation and needs before deciding to purchase or continuing to hold a policy with us. For full details including the terms, conditions, and exclusions that apply, please read and consider the policy wording and PDS, which is available at avant.org.au or by contacting us on 1800 128 268.
Best practice for your practice

Running a medical practice is now more complex than ever. To make practice management simpler, safer and more efficient, in 2017 Avant launched PracticeHub.

Better support for practices

In September 2016, Avant acquired a small business called MyPracticeManual, following research we conducted to identify ways to further support members who run their own practices. This is an increasingly complex environment with more regulation, compliance requirements and rising cost pressures. Developing an online practice management platform, that offers a comprehensive and customisable policy and procedures manual, is a start on the journey to providing wide-ranging support to practice owners.

Streamlining policies and processes

In May 2017, we launched a new, enhanced version of the MyPracticeManual platform - PracticeHub. Developed in collaboration with respected industry partners, including the Australian Association of Practice Management, it provides essential tools and resources to help you reduce the complexities, risks and costs involved in managing a practice, including:

- an online policies and procedures manual
- a library of relevant templates
- training and compliance modules for staff development
- integration of insurance, asset, maintenance and contract registers.

At Avant, we have seen first-hand how gaps or failures in practice systems and processes can contribute to poor patient outcomes, complaints or legal actions against a practice. Essentially, PracticeHub makes practice management simpler, safer and more efficient, allowing practice managers to focus on what is most important – their patients.

‘It provides the framework for us to conduct the business in an organised, standardised way with the dual benefit of great patient care and the minimisation of risk.’

Karen Campbell, AAPM Queensland Practice Manager of the Year, 2017.
Protecting your family too

‘I wanted to be with a medical defence organisation that was professional and could provide me with advice readily and solutions to issues – big or small.’

Dr Jing Cen Mao
General Practitioner Registrar
New South Wales
Avant member since 2013
Doctors’ Health Fund – created exclusively for the medical profession

Our core principles are providing high-quality products and service tailored to the needs of the medical community. This, more than ever, distinguishes us from the crowd, and has resulted in another year of market-leading growth.

FY17 was another great year for Doctors’ Health Fund. Since coming under the Avant umbrella in 2012, membership has more than doubled. While managing this growth, our product offering and service continue to exceed industry benchmarks.

High member satisfaction, low premium increases

We continue to receive very positive feedback through our annual member survey with a 96% satisfaction rating recorded this year.

It was our fifth consecutive year of below industry average premium increases, demonstrating our commitment to delivering value to our members.

We experienced another exceptional year of market-leading growth of 10.8% in FY17, at a time when participation in private health insurance continues to decline.

Delivering value to doctors

We continued to deliver value to our members, where it matters:

- Our unique Top Cover, paying benefits up to the AMA list of services and fees, has repeatedly outperformed the industry, covering 96% of services with no gap to pay.
- Our commitment to index medical benefits paid to members means our Prime Choice and Smart Starter products have consistently provided more services with no gap to pay compared to the industry average.
- As a fund, we have covered the complete cost of services at no gap to our members, at consistently higher rates than the industry average.

‘Doctors are quite different to other consumers of healthcare. Doctors’ Health Fund has clearly held true to its original principles of being by doctors for doctors.’

Doctors’ Health Fund member feedback

This year at a glance

96% member satisfaction

93% of 46,000 calls answered within 30 seconds

98% of 98,000 transactions processed within our tight service level standards

Percentage of medical services with no gap

Private health insurance products are issued by the Doctors’ Health Fund Pty Limited. ABN 68 001 417 527 a member of the Avant Mutual Group. Cover is subject to the terms and conditions (including waiting periods, limitations and exclusions) of the individual policy.
Advocacy and leadership

Doctors’ Health Fund is committed to providing a voice for the medical profession in our dealings with the private health insurance industry and related bodies.

In FY17, we:

• chaired two industry groups; one within the Australian Health Services Alliance and one in the information technology arena
• participated in two industry sub-committees, including one established by the Private Health Ministerial Advisory Committee to inform the Commonwealth’s reform agenda
• kept members informed of unique insights and activities within the private health system, via our featured articles, opinion pieces and newsletters
• presented to colleges, associations and conferences on emerging issues in private health and promoted greater collaboration among stakeholders.

‘I have my health insurance with the Doctors’ Health Fund and I’m about to take out income protection with Avant. It’s just easy that it’s all streamlined and from a trustworthy organisation.’

Dr Marie Sinclair
Gastroenterologist
Victoria
Doctors’ Health Fund and Avant member since 2009
Australia’s most comprehensive life insurance for doctors

When undertaking research for which new products to develop, the resounding response from members was life insurance. Members were looking to someone they could trust and who understood their specific needs. We were therefore very pleased to announce the launch of a new suite of life insurance products in 2017.

The launch of Avant Life Insurance is consistent with Avant’s strategy of fulfilling both the personal needs of doctors as well as their practitioner and practice needs. Importantly, the launch of these products will also provide additional diversification to Avant’s revenue streams and improve our financial resilience over the longer term.

**Designed exclusively for doctors**

On investigating the market, we found even the most premium of products available did not provide protection against some of the unique risks doctors face. This is why we have designed our own suite of products to deliver what doctors really need, including:

- income protection
- life insurance
- total and permanent disability cover
- trauma cover and practice expense cover.

**‘I have all my insurances already, but I want advice and insurance from someone I trust.’**

Avant member feedback

**New products meet members’ needs**

As doctors, you see first-hand patients whose lives are changed in an instant, often with dire financial consequences for them and their families. While as individual doctors you are exposed to the same frailties of life, your vocation does present some unique risks, many of which are not covered by traditional life insurance policies. Since launching our life insurance products, we have seen strong interest and uptake by doctors in training, who were the first group of members offered the new products.

Our life insurance benefits include:

- cover for a doctor’s chosen specialty even if they can perform other medical duties
- flexibility to adjust your coverage when personal or professional milestones occur, without requiring additional medicals
- an Australian first – litigation support to supplement a member’s lost income should they be subject to a medico-legal event
- doctor-specific benefits to protect the risks practice owners face.

**The most comprehensive cover available for doctors**

We are proud to say our efforts have been acknowledged by leading financial services and insurance research firm, DEXX&R, who assessed our range of life insurance products and confirmed they provide ‘Australia’s most comprehensive protection for doctors’ – with managing director, Mark Kachor, stating: ‘the facts speak for themselves’.  

Avant Mutual Financial Services (AFS) is a registered business name of Doctors Financial Services Pty Ltd ABN 56 610 510 328, AFSL 487758 (DFS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Avant Mutual Group. AFS is the team responsible for providing you with general and personal financial advice and assisting you to implement your life insurance. The information presented here is general advice only and has been prepared by DFS without taking into account your objectives, financial situation and needs. You should consider these, having regard to the appropriateness of this advice and the policy wording and/or PDS for the relevant product (which are available by contacting us on 1800 128 268 or lifeadvice@avant.org.au) before deciding to purchase or continuing to hold a policy.
Financial advice from someone you trust

As you’d expect from Avant, our protection is backed up by expert advice. Our understanding of doctors allows us to provide the right advice to members for their personal and professional lives.

New – Avant Financial Services

Along with our core medical indemnity insurance, our members want expert advice. So, together with our new suite of life insurance products for doctors, we also offer members specialised advice to ensure they have the appropriate cover for their needs. This advice is provided by a new team of specialist in-house advisors, who form part of the new Avant Mutual Financial Services (AFS) team.

As part of Avant Mutual you can be reassured that they will be working in your best interests.

Experience advising doctors

As a trusted advisor to thousands of members, Avant has specifically established AFS to provide quality support and expert life insurance advice to doctors and their families.

With the collective experience of more than 75,000 members to draw from, Avant understands a doctor’s insurance needs like no other team of life insurance consultants and financial advisors.

We provide services that include:

- full comprehensive and personalised life insurance strategies which help identify the needs, goals and insurance options for you and your family
- guidance through the application process ensuring it is as quick and easy as possible
- arranging life insurance cover for you and your family from a range of Australia’s leading life insurance providers
- ongoing advice to ensure your cover remains appropriate to your life and career stage
- facilitating the insurance claims process, making sure you get what you are entitled to.

Travel insurance for doctors protecting thousands of members

There has been a 16.5% increase in uptake of Avant Travel Insurance by members, and feedback over the last year remains extremely positive. We continue to work with partners to ensure we offer a high level of services and affordability so it continues to be a valued benefit for members.

Whether travelling for business or pleasure, Avant’s premium travel insurance has you covered. It’s tailored to meet the specific needs of doctors, as you’d expect from Australia’s largest doctor-owned mutual.

Avant Travel Insurance is one of the most comprehensive and competitively priced policies we have found in Australia, covering the things most important to our members.

This 12-month annual multi-trip policy gives you the premium protection you expect for up to 180 days per trip, whether travelling for a conference, an elective or holiday. The cover provides for overseas and interstate trips and can include accompanying spouse and unmarried dependent children.

‘An outstanding travel insurance policy meeting my every need’. Avant member feedback

Highlights for FY17

89% paid travel insurance policies renewed

27.7% increase in policies

7,900 members signed up for or renewed their Avant Travel Insurance.

Avant Travel Insurance Cover is available under a Group Policy between Accident & Health International Underwriting Pty Limited ABN 26 053 335 952 and Avant Mutual Group Limited ABN 58 123 154 898. The issuers are CGU Insurance Limited ABN 27 004 478 371 and AIA Australia Limited ABN 79 004 837 861. For full details including the restrictions, terms, conditions and exclusions that apply, please read and consider the PDS, and Avant’s Terms and Conditions of Travel Insurance Cover available at avant.org.au or by contacting us on 1800 128 268.
Supporting your profession

Dr Ruth Mitchell
Neurosurgery Trainee
Victoria
Avant member since 2014
A voice in the healthcare system

As Australia’s largest medical defence organisation, we believe we have a responsibility to members to provide a loud and credible voice for positive change to health policy.

A respected voice for our members’ interests

Avant’s advocacy program draws on our extensive medico-legal expertise and claims experience to inform our positions and submissions. We rely heavily on local experience from our state offices and on our member committees and stakeholder relationships.

Input is sought from members and professional bodies through our workshops and discussion papers. Member committees such as our National Advocacy Stakeholder Committee (NASC), an advisory committee of doctors with close links to medical colleges and other stakeholder organisations, provide valuable insights into issues affecting our members and the profession. This helps ensure we are able to represent our members and propose practical solutions that benefit the profession.

Strong relationships to build influence

Our strategy is to work alongside other stakeholders, such as the AMA and colleges. Our members’ interests are protected in public policy and regulatory debates. We make submissions, publish position papers and articles, and meet with governments and regulators to call for change.

Advocacy activities summary

Medical indemnity

The Commonwealth Government announced a first principles review of the government’s Medical Indemnity Schemes. We argue the schemes should continue, and be enhanced because we believe they provide good value for money. While there is scope for improvement, the schemes help ensure patients are compensated in the event of medical negligence; while managing financial volatility and ensuring stability in the market.

We have been raising awareness and informing the profession about the importance of the schemes and likely impacts if they are removed or wound back. Many doctors who began practising after 2002 are less aware of the instability of medical indemnity insurance at that time and may not be aware that doctors’ premiums will increase if the schemes are wound back.

Medical regulation

Our primary focus has been on achieving process improvements to the way regulators handle notifications and complaints against doctors. Avant’s input was referenced in the final report of the Senate Inquiry into the medical complaints process.

Mandatory reporting

Avant has been advocating for several years for national adoption of the treating practitioner exemption from mandatory reporting that currently applies in Western Australia. Following renewed calls from Avant and other doctors’ organisations, the COAG Health Council recently committed to a consistent national approach to mandatory reporting. The health ministers are due to consider the issue further at their November 2017 meeting.

Training program issues

Following our successful workshop on this topic last year, we launched our discussion paper at the 2017 Royal Australasian College of Surgeons’ Annual Scientific Congress. We continue to speak in support of fair processes, support for trainees and supervisors and less adversarial resolution of disputes.

Advocacy activities for FY17

7 position papers

35+ presentations in Australia and overseas

11 submissions on topics including reforms to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law

increase in media coverage on key issues
Partnerships to support the profession

Avant extends its support for the medical profession by partnering with medical colleges, associations and societies. The aim is to build strong relationships to better understand and benefit our members and the medical community.

Promoting better outcomes

We work closely with professional bodies to contribute to a better and safer healthcare system. In partnering with professional bodies, Avant also shares knowledge on claims trends, enabling us to contribute to education programs and advocacy.

Developing partnerships

Avant entered into a formal partnership with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO). Our partnership centres on investing in initiatives including education programs and support for RANZCO’s Leadership Development Program.

ontewards for young doctors

Avant has also partnered with onthewards, a free open access medical education website, run by junior doctors. Avant and onthewards have committed to working closely together to develop risk management content tailored for junior doctors’ development.

In 2017, we also signed a new three-year partnerships agreement with the Australian & New Zealand Society of Cardiac & Thoracic Surgeons.

Local and national support

Avant supported more than 30 professional bodies and attended over 700 events, including national conferences, local professional body meetings, and hospital and university events.

‘USANZ and Avant have had a strong relationship over many years. We have worked together to provide our members with the education required to reduce their risk exposure and understand management strategies required, with patient safety the primary concern. USANZ looks forward to continuing to work with Avant.’

Michael Nugara, CEO Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand

Avant supported many professional bodies in FY17, including:

- Australian Medical Association
- Australian Medical Students’ Association
- Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Royal Australian College of Physicians
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
- Australasian Gynaecological Endoscopy and Surgery Society
- Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons
- Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand
- Australian Orthopaedic Association
- Neurosurgical Society of Australasia
- Australian Hand Surgery Society
- Australian & New Zealand Society of Cardiac & Thoracic Surgeons
- Australian Association of Practice Management
- Australian Society of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery
- College of Intensive Care Medicine
‘Because it’s a mutual, Avant is looking after members and the medical community as a whole - so not only do individuals benefit, but the whole profession benefits.’

Dr Jagjit Gilhotra
Ophthalmologist
South Australia
Avant member since 2013
Investing in the future of medical practice

We support research, education and leadership programs to improve outcomes in healthcare.

Supporting practical research

Investment focuses on projects that can be rapidly translated into clinical practice or policy improvements and contribute to sustainable cultural change in medicine. We will report on the outputs and outcomes of the projects that we fund over time to demonstrate both the short and long-term value of the investment.

We will be seeking expressions of interest prior to detailed applications, to assist applicants to develop their applications. These projects should:

1. develop and support leadership capability, especially those focused on quality improvement in medicine
2. focus on research into reducing medico-legal and clinical risk
3. educate on quality, safety and professionalism, including:
   a. scholarship programs for education, conference attendance and professional development
   b. financial support for visiting scholars and keynote speakers
   c. education developed and delivered by the funding recipient
4. encompass projects, research and education programs on professionalism in medicine.

Avant Foundation

During 2017, we established the Avant Foundation to promote quality, safety and professionalism within the medical profession. In particular, the Foundation supports programs focused on risk reduction for both doctors and patients. Our aim is to make a lasting difference to medical practice and the community in Australia.

The Foundation is governed by a council, which oversees the implementation and operation of the foundation as a whole. A foundation board ensures the sound and prudent management of charitable activities. The activities are conducted via a Public Ancillary Fund, which is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (as a charity) and endorsed as a deductible gift recipient with the Australian Taxation Office.

It is important that the Avant Foundation is sustainable. To do this, we will ensure an appropriate funding mix from different sources and prudently manage investments and contributions.

Expressions of interest open October 2017

‘Promoting safer practice of medicine requires ongoing research and education to ensure constant improvement. The Foundation is an important and significant new initiative that will allow Avant to invest in future leaders and projects that will result in enduring benefits for patient safety and quality healthcare.’

Prof Jonathan Morris, University of Sydney
Avant Foundation Board member
Avant member since 1998

The Avant Foundation (ABN 27 179 743 817) is administered by its trustee, Avant Foundation Limited (ACN 618 393 847). The Avant Foundation is a Public Ancillary Fund, endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient.
The 2016 Avant AAPM Scholarship recipients, with the Avant and AAPM judging representatives.

Avant Quality Improvement Grants

The first Quality Improvement Grant recipients were celebrated at an awards dinner in Sydney along with DI&Y Research Scholarship recipients (l-r Dr Susannah Ward, Dr Jillian Tomlinson, Dr Fiona Broderick, A/Prof Ralph Audehm, Tessa Devries on behalf of Dr Dinah Reddihough and Dr Diana Blanckensee).

The following scholarship winners for 2016 were announced at the annual AAPM annual conference in October 2016:

Annette Ah Shay, QLD
Rachel Hatzopoulos, VIC
Jodie Boyce, NSW
Gail Lloyd, NSW
Elli Lazarov, WA

Recipients of the 2017 scholarships will be announced at the AAPM annual conference in October 2017.

Applications for the 2018 Quality Improvement Grants open in February 2018.

Avant AAPM Scholarship Program

Avant is proud to partner with the Australian Association of Practice Management and each year we sponsor five scholarships for practice management courses at UNE Partnerships through the Avant AAPM Scholarship Program. The purpose of the scholarships program is to foster and promote continued training and professional development for AAPM members.

Avant Foundation Board members

(l-r) Emeritus Professor Kim Oates AM, Clinical Excellence Commission; Dr Penny Browne, Avant Senior Medical Officer; Professor Jonathan Morris, University of Sydney; Dr Matthew Doane, Anaesthetist; Dr Beverley Rowbotham, Avant Board member; Associate Professor Julian Bait, Chairman of Council at the Australian Medical Association (VIC); Ms Julie Webster, General Manager, Member Engagement, Avant.

Avant Quality Improvement Grants

Last year, we introduced the Avant Quality Improvement Grants. These grants go a step beyond our commitment of supporting individual members to practise safely and effectively, to give practices the opportunity to drive sustainable solutions to improve quality and safety. The recipients for 2016 represented the very best ideas that will enhance quality of care in the years to come.

Congratulations to the six doctors and two practices who received a 2016 Quality Improvement Grant:

Associate Professor Ralph Audehm, VIC – General Practitioner
Professor Michael Berk, VIC – Professor of Psychiatry, Deakin University and Barwon Health
Dr Fiona Broderick, VIC – General Practitioner
Dr Pearl Chung, NSW – Rehabilitation
Professor Dinah Reddihough, VIC – Paediatrician
Associate Professor Arthur Richardson, NSW – Head of Upper Gastrointestinal and Hepato-Biliary Surgery
Dr Jillian Tomlinson, VIC – Plastic Surgeon, Melbourne Hand Surgery (Practice Grant)
Dr Diana Blanckensee, NSW – General Practitioner, Tweed Health for Everyone (Practice Grant)
Promoting advancement in healthcare

Avant contributes to many activities and initiatives throughout Australia to support the advancement in healthcare. We are proud to have enabled members and colleagues to hear from and interact with leaders in medicine.

onthewards discusses diagnostic error

International keynote speaker Dr Mark Graber, the president and founder of the Society to Improve Diagnosis in Medicine, presented at the Australasian Diagnostic Error in Medicine Conference in Melbourne. Avant arranged for him to be interviewed by onthewards founder Dr James Edwards on understanding diagnostic errors. A video of the interview is available on the Avant website.

Debating voluntary assisted dying

Professor Brian Owler addressed attendees at an Avant seminar which explored some of the medico-legal issues of voluntary assisted dying. Hosted by our Advocacy team, more than 50 people took part in the discussions on one of the high-profile issues facing doctors.

Improving practice management

Dr Nathan Pinskier, the chair of the RACGP Expert Committee on eHealth and Practice Systems (left), with Peter Aroney, the CEO Doctors’ Health Fund (centre), and Avant senior medical advisor (and RACGP NSW GP of the Year) Dr Walid Jammal at the AAPM annual conference, where several Avant medico-legal experts presented.

RACMA - Harm Free Healthcare

In October 2016, Avant supported the visit of international guest speaker and the author of The House of God, Dr Stephen Bergman (pen name Samuel Shem), as part of our sponsorship of the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators annual conference, titled Harm Free Healthcare, in Brisbane.

Interplast student placement

Avant has been a proud supporter of Interplast and each year we offer one student the chance to accompany the Interplast volunteer surgical team. University of Melbourne student, Nicole Batten was this year’s lucky recipient, visiting Fiji with the Interplast team in 2017.
Supporting our members in making a difference

Assisting our young doctors in training to improve medical care and patient outcomes is one way we recognise the value of medical research to the Australian community.

Doctor in Training Research Scholarship Program

Since 2012, the Avant Doctor in Training Research Scholarship Program has provided support to 59 young doctors for life-changing research. The program aims to drive better patient outcomes and support some of Australia’s most-promising medical researchers.

Started in response to the difficulties young doctors face in securing research funding, the scholarships support research across a wide array of specialties. The 2017 program was restructured to increase opportunities for emerging researchers.

‘Support from Avant not only relieves financial strain while studying and allows me to concentrate on research, but promotes research as both fundamental to the advancement of medicine and something that the medical profession values.’

Dr Genevieve Oliver, 2016 Doctor in Training Research Scholarship recipient

Congratulations to the 20 outstanding doctors who were awarded scholarships in 2016:

Advancement of Medicine
Dr Pedro Guio Aguilar, VIC – Plastic Surgery Registrar
Dr Joseph Dusseldorp, NSW – Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery Registrar
Dr Chris Lim, VIC – Unaccredited Ophthalmology Registrar
Dr Rahul Muthalaly, VIC – Resident Medical Officer
Dr Kazauki Negishi, TAS – Cardiology Registrar
Dr Alexander Olaussen, VIC – Critical Care Resident
Dr Genevieve Oliver, SA – Ophthalmology Registrar
Dr Rochelle Ryan, QLD – Anaesthesia Registrar
Dr Michelle Sun, SA – Ophthalmology Registrar
Dr Susannah Ward, NSW – Rehabilitation Medicine Registrar
Dr Phoebe Williams, NSW – Paediatrics and Infectious Diseases Registrar

Quality in Medicine
Dr Ramy Bishay, NSW – Endocrinology Registrar
Samuel Davies, NSW – Surgical Registrar
Dr Emily Fitzpatrick, NSW – Paediatric Registrar
Dr Malcolm Forbes, VIC – Psychiatry Registrar
Dr Ammar Kheir, QLD – Gastroenterology Registrar
Dr Benjamin Lazarus, QLD – Medical Registrar
Dr Clement Lee, NSW – Anaesthesia Registrar
Dr Felix Ng, QLD – Neurology Registrar
Dr May Wong, NSW – Physician Registrar

Applications for the 2018 program open in February.
Sharing our insights

Avant publications keep you up to date on the medico-legal issues facing doctors, using actual cases and drawing on our extensive claims experience to provide practical advice.

Regular e-newsletters from our experts

Written by our medical, legal and risk experts, our articles provide insights and practical steps to assist members to practise safely and reduce the risk of a complaint or claim.

We have also received many comments and questions from members on our articles, and a number of members contributing articles themselves.

What you get in our electronic newsletters:
• analysis of current medico-legal cases and issues
• practical tips and links to resources
• state, national and specialty event alerts
• information on getting the most out of your membership
• comments to the editor on published articles.

This year, we delivered more than 500,000 newsletters containing 145 articles tailored to members across 10 specialties and all eight states and territories.

‘They are extremely educational and definitely have my best interest at heart.’
Avant member feedback

Connect magazine – in-depth case reviews

Sent to more than 50,000 members twice a year, Connect combines the challenging issues faced by our members with expert medico-legal commentary on these and other issues facing doctors.

What you get in Connect:
• in-depth analysis of medico-legal cases
• expert commentary on legislative issues affecting doctors
• advice on the safe delivery of medicine.

Feedback from our 2017 survey showed two thirds of members had read a recent issue of Connect, with many sharing it among colleagues.

If you have missed an issue, current and back issues are available online.

More channel options

Over the last year, following member feedback, we increased our activity on social media channels Twitter and LinkedIn. We regularly post our published articles, events, activities and other news content to keep members better informed.

‘They are extremely educational and definitely have my best interest at heart.’
Avant member feedback

‘Avant publications are extremely well written and cover sufficient topics.’
Avant member feedback

<table>
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<tr>
<th>145</th>
<th>articles published</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>33%</td>
<td>increase in member newsletters opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>increase in articles read</td>
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Most popular articles

- Colleague’s malicious complaint
- Optometrist found guilty of manslaughter
- Complaint against registrar over patient death
- Indirect communication between colleagues has serious consequences
- Removing uncertainty when issuing medical certificates

Issue 7 investigated the increasing claims environment

Issue 8 looked at maintaining professionalism in an ever-challenging medico-legal climate
Serving you, our members

‘Avant has established member advisory groups in each state, supports young doctors through the Doctor in Training Research Scholarship Program and provides excellent educational materials.’

Dr Chris Hughes
Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
South Australia
Avant member since 2011
Members have their say

Avant members report high levels of satisfaction and are happy to recommend Avant to colleagues.

As a mutual, delivering for members is our main focus, so it’s important you let us know how well we’re doing.

**Avant members are highly satisfied**

Each year, we invite all members to rate us in the Avant Annual Member Survey.

We’re thrilled to report that member satisfaction improved across all core measures in FY17. Our members reported high levels of satisfaction and said they are happy to recommend Avant to colleagues.

**Members more likely to recommend Avant**

Avant members are over four times more likely to recommend Avant than the insurance industry average.

**Our members are here to stay**

Ninety eight per cent of fellowed members intend to stay with Avant, an increase on an already high level of loyalty of 97% last year.

**Responding to feedback**

Members provided more than 12,000 responses about Avant’s performance in surveys last year. They helped us understand how we can improve on our service and product design.

Thank you to all those who provided feedback over the last year.

‘Always helpful and well run. Good information in newsletter. Colleagues have been well supported when they had medico-legal problems.’

‘I really appreciate their advice and support! Their articles are also very informative.’

‘All of my interactions with Avant have been positive and compare very favourably indeed with comments of my colleagues who are with other medical indemnity insurers.’

Avant member feedback from survey

Making things easier for you

**Highly-praised services team**

Nearly 49,000 members interacted with our Member Services team in FY17, either over the telephone or online. Our team is the frontline for serving you in terms of policy and membership queries.

We have a continuous member survey running for anyone who calls Member Services, to make sure we’re hitting the mark. We’re proud of the high satisfaction rating we achieved in FY17.

**Extended business hours**

Over the last year we extended our team with additional staff in our Perth and Canberra offices. This means we have extended our business hours to members across the country.

**Online experience**

Now you can self-manage your membership from anywhere. On your computer or smartphone, you can:

- get copies of documents including confirmation certificates and tax receipts
- update contact details
- request changes to gross billings, category of practice etc.
- view the cover you have
- adjust your billings, category of practice and renew
- update your payment details.

Also in 2017, we expanded the range of payment options to include PayPal and SMS.

‘Avant has been easy to communicate with through the customer service department. Comfortable to hear a human voice rather than a recorded one.’

Avant member feedback
Representing members’ interests – locally across Australia

Your voice in your mutual is represented by fellow members from across all states and territories. Avant’s five advisory bodies, local and national councils and committees ensure your interests are effectively represented and enable us to draw upon our members’ expertise and experience.

Members informing our activities

We would like to thank all those members who have contributed to the member councils and committees during the 2017 financial year. The insights gained have been invaluable to us, right across the organisation.

Members came to meetings around the country across the councils and committees, bringing their varied perspectives. Representing a wide range of careers, each added their voice to inform Avant’s activities.

National Advocacy Stakeholder Committee

This committee advises on strategic medico-legal and associated advocacy issues where Avant can drive change on behalf of doctors. Committee members represent seven different professional colleges, societies and associations.

State Medical Experts Committees

These provide expert advice on accepted medical practice in relation to claims and professional standards. There are 14 highly regarded experts in 11 specialty areas of medicine drawn from members across multiple states.

State Member Advisory Committees

These committees advise on issues impacting doctors at state level, giving members a voice on issues relevant to Avant. Over 70 members from across Australia contributed to discussions on assisting doctors starting in private practice, the impact of ‘junk’ health insurance policies and end-of-life considerations.

Doctors in Training Advisory Council

The council assists and advises on matters impacting trainees and activities to support young doctors. There are 15 members representing all mainland states, who again in FY17 have contributed to the delivery of our scholarship program for trainees.

Avant Student Advisory Council

This council identifies emerging and existing issues affecting medical students. There are nine members representing universities across the country. An initiative to create fact sheets to assist students with their OSCE preparation resulted from a meeting in 2016, with these proving to be some of the most commonly accessed resources on the Avant website.
Members elected to the Board
Avant Mutual Group Limited and Avant Group Holdings Limited

Dr Steven Hambleton
MBBS, FAMA, FRACGP (Hons), FAICD
I have really enjoyed this extraordinary opportunity to be part of the leadership team that drives this group of businesses, which are critical to the future of healthcare in Australia. We are in the business for the long haul, from the beginning of medical school to retirement. Our Retirement Reward Plan returns capital to those doctors who stay with us on the long journey, and this remains a unique benefit. In the next financial year, I’m looking forward to building on Avant’s new products to help our members protect and improve their businesses.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Risk and Audit Committees

Dr Beverley Rowbotham
MBBS (Hons 1), MD, FRACP, FRCPA, GAICD
I am particularly proud of the new Avant Life/TPD cover for members this year. It is a very confusing area for time-poor doctors and Avant has created a unique product that uses its understanding of doctors’ careers and their insurance experience. The feedback from members about their trust in Avant has been gratifying. A passion for myself and the whole Board currently surrounds the Government’s announcement that it intends to review the medical indemnity support schemes, which has triggered bad memories of the medical indemnity crisis in 2003. That is when I profoundly understood the importance of insurance to doctors for peace of mind for a doctor and their family.

Dr Douglas Travis
MBBS, FRACS, FAMA, GAICD
The achievement that I am most proud of is providing rock solid defence and security for myself and my colleagues to practise medicine. It has been a difficult indemnity environment with rising claims and problems on many fronts. I have played a small part in keeping Avant on track to keep us safe. This year has also seen the continued roll out of the Avant strategy that is to build a suite of financial related services to make our life easier. I look forward to next year, to see the further strengthening of these services and products for doctors. My desire is to help steer better and more ethical financial services for doctors at a reasonable price while keeping us financially secure.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Group Investment Committee

Dr Jan Dudley
MBBS FRANZCOG, GAICD
The past year has delivered some excellent outcomes for members. Our success has enabled the Board to innovate, and continue to return funds to members through the loyalty and retirement reward programs. I am particularly pleased Avant has developed a strong advocacy program, providing a respected voice for doctors with governments and regulatory bodies. I look forward to the continued development of in-house legal expertise to provide the very best support for doctors facing complaints or litigation. A strong medical defence organisation is an essential partner for all doctors, and I am passionate about continuing to ensure Avant remains successful, effective and member focussed.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Remuneration and Nominations Committees

Professor Simon Willcock
MBBS (Hons I), PhD, FRACGP, Dip. Obs. RANZCOG/RACGP, GAICD
My positions at Avant are as Chair of Avant Mutual Group Limited, and a Director of Avant Group Holdings Limited, Avant Insurance Limited and The Doctors’ Health Fund. I am a general practitioner and Director of Primary Care at Macquarie University Hospital.

I have extensive experience in a number of health governance roles, including public and private sector health providers, and health education and training organisations. This is augmented by my long interest in the health and wellbeing of my fellow doctors. As Chair of the Avant Board, I am able to utilise this experience to act as an effective advocate for my peers.

Special responsibilities: Chair of the Nominations Committee and member of the Remuneration Committee

Dr William Glasson
MBBS (Qld), FRANZCO, FRACS, FRACGP, FRCOphth, DipAppSc(Opt), GAICD
I am proud of the financial performance of our company as a member of the Group Investment Committee. We will continue to deliver certainty for our members who have legal action against them, and maintain a service-focused organisation. I am most proud of the high level of member satisfaction with our provision of day-to-day services. We are an organisation that is owned by our members and we are here to serve our members at a personal level.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Group Investment Committee

Top left to right: Mr Bruce Foy, The Hon. John Fahey AC, Mr Peter Beck, Dr Steve Hambleton, Mr Andrew Baldeman, Dr William Glasson, Mr Duncan West
Bottom left to right: Dr Douglas Travis, Dr Jan Dudley, Prof Simon Willcock, Mr Peter Polson, Dr Beverley Rowbotham, Mr Terry Williamson
Business experts appointed to the Board

Mr Andrew Boldeman  
BEC, FIAA  
CEO of Avant Mutual Group Limited

Mr Boldeman is the Chief Executive Officer of the Avant Mutual Group, and a Director of AIL and DHF. He is a fellow of the Institute of Actuaries of Australia. He is a former CEO of the Group Life division of TAL (formerly Tower Australia), Australia’s largest life insurer. Other previous positions include TAL’s Chief Actuary and leadership roles at management consultancy Tillinghast Towers Perrin and AMP.

Mr Peter Beck  
BSc, FIA, FIAA, FSA, FASFA

Mr Beck is a Director of AMGL, AGHL and AIL. Mr Beck is an actuary by profession and has over 30 years’ experience in banking, insurance, superannuation and investments working in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, South Africa and the UK. He was formerly CEO of Pillar Administration, CEO of Comminsure, and Group General Manager, Strategic Development and Group Appointed Actuary at Colonial.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Risk Committee, the Audit Committee and the Group Investment Committee

The Hon John Fahey AC

The Hon. John Fahey is a Director of AMGL, AGHL and AIL, and is the Chair of DHF. He was the Premier of NSW for three years, and then Federal Minister for Finance and Administration (1996-2001). Prior to Parliament, he practised as a solicitor. In 2002 he was awarded a Companion in the Order of Australia. He was appointed President of the World Anti-Doping Authority in 2007, a position he held until the end of 2013. In 2014, he was appointed as Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University. He is the current Chair of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Group Investment Committee and the Remuneration Committee

Mr Bruce Foy  
B.Com, LLB, FAICD

Mr Foy is a Director of AGHL, AIL and DHF. Mr Foy was admitted as a barrister of the Supreme Court of NSW in 1989, and is a fellow of the Institute of Company Directors. Mr Foy is a professional non-executive director, being on a number of public and private boards.

Special responsibilities: Member of the Risk Committee and the Audit Committee

Mr Peter Polson  
BCom, MBL, PMD

Mr Polson is a Director of AMGL and AGHL and is the Chair of AIL. He has an extensive background in banking, insurance and financial services. He was formerly Managing Director of Colonial First State Investments, and with the Commonwealth Bank Group as Group Executive, responsible for all investment and insurance services.

Special responsibilities: Chair of the Group Investment Committee, member of the Remuneration Committee and the Nominations Committee

Mr Duncan West  
ANZIIF (Snr Assoc.), CIP, FCII, BSc (Econ), GAICD

Mr West is a Director of AGHL and AIL. He has over 30 years’ experience in insurance with a particular focus on risk pricing and underwriting, reinsurance, claims and distribution management in both general insurance and life insurance. He has worked in the UK, India and Australia including as CEO of Vero Insurance and CGU Insurance. Most recently he was Executive General Manager of Retail Wealth for NAB. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Insurance Institute. He was formerly Director and President of the Australia and New Zealand Institute of Insurance and Finance.

Special responsibilities: Chair of the Remuneration Committee and member of the Nominations Committee, the Risk Committee and the Audit Committee

Mr Terry Williamson  
BEC, MBA, FCA, FCpa, FCIS, MACS, MIIA, FAICD

Mr Williamson is a Director of AGHL and AIL. Mr Williamson was previously a member of the Board of Advice, School of Business, University of Sydney, an External Member of the Audit Committee of the Reserve Bank of Australia, former CEO of Bankers Trust Australia Limited/ BT Financial Group Limited and a former partner of Price Waterhouse.

Special responsibilities: Chair of the Risk Committee and Chair of the Audit Committee
‘I never expected such a dividend and paid my membership happy in the knowledge of the fantastic service you provide in the way of my medical insurance. The peace of mind was well worth it. You have all made my life more comfortable – both in work and retirement.’

Dr Larry Fingleton
Retired practitioner
New South Wales
Avant member since 1993
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