Health Information Management Association of Australia Limited
ABN 54 008 451 910

Member Briefing: Proposed Adoption of Updated Membership Model

24 August 2026

Message from the President

For more than 75 years, HIMAA has grown and evolved alongside the health information management profession. Throughout that history, our strength has come from the knowledge, commitment, and leadership of our members.

Together, we have helped establish health information management as a profession that is integral to safe and effective healthcare through the quality, integrity, and responsible use of health information.

Today, the profession continues to evolve. New technologies, changing education and career pathways, growing workforce pressures, and heightened expectations around health data are reshaping our work. They are also creating new opportunities for HIMAA and the professional community we represent.

Against this backdrop, the HIMAA Board is inviting members to consider a proposed new membership model.

The proposal builds on HIMAA's work to define the contemporary health information management profession and develop new Professional Standards.

We have an opportunity to consider whether our membership model properly reflects the professional community HIMAA already represents and whether it provides a strong and sustainable foundation for the years ahead.

The Board wants to hear from members before the proposal is finalised and proceeds through the appropriate constitutional voting process. Your questions, insights and concerns will help us identify what works, what may need refinement and whether there are other matters we have not yet considered.

Whether you have been a HIMAA member for many years or are at the beginning of your professional journey, your perspective matters.

By taking part, you can help ensure HIMAA continues to honour its history while confidently preparing for the future.

Catherine Garvey
President
Health Information Management Association of Australia

About this Paper

This paper summarises the proposed HIMAA membership model and the reasons for change. It has been prepared to support consultation with members before any changes are put to a formal resolution and vote. This paper has been authored by the HIMAA Board and is part of a broader initiative to review and modernise HIMAA's Constitution.

This paper may be read alongside the following:

a) **Member Briefing: Proposed Adoption of Updated HIMAA Constitution**
b) **Draft Constitution**
c) **FAQ**

Members are invited to provide feedback (Section 5) by the closing date.

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1. Summary

HIMAA is consulting on a proposed update to its membership model to better reflect today's health information management profession, improve equity between professional streams, and enable HIMAA to set and maintain professional standards through clearer definitions and credentialing. The proposal retains HIMAA's identity as a professional association while modernising membership categories and rights. In summary:

a) HIMAA would continue to use a professional-standing model (membership reflects professional status for those recognised as health information management professionals).
b) The proposed model introduces a Professional member category (replacing the current concept of "Full" and "Senior Associate" membership) to recognise

Health Information Managers, Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists as the same membership category

c) Membership categories remain simple and familiar: Professional, Associate, Student, Fellow, and Life members.
d) Student membership would be simplified by removing the restriction that students must not be in full-time employment.

2. What is proposed

Two broad options were considered: (1) an open membership model where membership categories are not associated with professional standing, and (2) a professional-standing model where HIMAA recognises professional status through membership. The proposal is to retain a **professional-standing model**, with updates to improve inclusivity and clarity.

Proposed category	**Who it is for**	**Member Rights**
Professional member	People recognised by HIMAA as health information management professionals (at minimum: Health Information Managers (HIMs), Clinical Coders, Clinical Documentation Specialists).	Vote at general meetings; eligible to be a Director (including Vice President, Treasurer with requirement for President to always be a Health Information Manager); governance safeguard of a minimum majority of HIMs on the Board; can participate in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups.
Associate member	People interested in, working in, committed to or affiliated with the health information industry (including reciprocal members), who are not eligible for another category.	No vote at general meetings; not eligible to be a Director; can participate in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups.
Student member	People studying a HIMAA accredited or approved program who are not Professional, Fellow or Life members.	No vote at general meetings; not eligible to be a Director; can participate in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups.
Fellow member	Professional members with at least seven continuous years' membership and a significant contribution recognised by the Board.	Vote at general meetings; eligible to be a Director (including Vice President, Treasurer with requirement for President to always be a Health Information Manager); can participate

		in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups.
Life member	Professional or Fellow members recognised by the Board for distinguished service or contribution.	Vote at general meetings; eligible to be a Director (including Vice President, Treasurer with requirement for President to always be a Health Information Manager); can participate in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups.

2.1 Key Changes from the Current Model

1. **"Full" becomes "Professional".** The intent is to shift language from degree-centric status to profession-centric recognition, while still retaining professional standing and governance safeguards.
2. **Explicit inclusion of Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists.** The proposed definition for Professional member explicitly includes Health Information Managers, Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists as a minimum professional scope. The eligibility for each professional domain will be stipulated within HIMAA policy.
3. **Greater flexibility to recognise evolving roles.** HIMAA can define and recognise additional professional domains (e.g., Health Data Analysts) over time without needing to hard-code every occupation in the Constitution. Any additional professional group would be recognised only where it aligns with HIMAA's Professional Identity Statement and its defined specialisations which will be stipulated within HIMAA policy.
4. **Student membership is simplified.** The restriction that student members must not be in full-time employment is removed, improving equity and making it easier to understand the student cohort.
5. **Associate membership clarifies who it is for.** Associate membership continues for people interested in or working with health information and explicitly includes reciprocal members from other associations.
6. **Professional domain can be captured separately.** Under the proposed model, professional domain (e.g., HIM, Clinical Coder, CDS) can be recorded as a data item alongside membership, rather than driving separate membership classes.

3. Why change? Rationale for the proposed model

The proposed model is designed to address known issues in the current membership structure and to meet the attributes required of HIMAA's future membership model.

The HIMAA Board has identified the following limitations with the current membership model:

a) Lack of equality of health information management professionals, favouring Full members (Health Information Managers) over Senior Associate members (Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists)
b) No mention of Clinical Documentation Specialists
c) Lack of senior leadership rights for Senior Associate members
d) Student membership is limited to those not in full-time employment while undertaking endorsed study

In summary, the proposed changes aim to balance **professional legitimacy** with **equity**, **inclusivity** and **future readiness**.

3.1 Key reasons for the proposed approach

1. **Maintain HIMAA's purpose and identity as a professional association.** HIMAA's core legitimacy is in defining, supporting and advancing professional practice in health information management. A professional-standing model reinforces standards, competence and professional identity.
2. **Maintain HIMAA's unique focus on health information management.** Membership categories signal who HIMAA is primarily for. Retaining a professional-standing category helps ensure HIMAA remains centred on health information management professionals, while still offering inclusive pathways for others via Associate and Student membership.
3. **Improve equity between professional occupations.** The current model can be experienced as favouring Health Information Managers ("Full") over Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists ("Senior Associate"), even though HIMAA's own Professional Identity Statement recognises these occupations as part of the same profession. The proposed "Professional member" category recognises these domains as equals.
4. **Enable HIMAA to recognise the profession in a changing workforce.** The profession is evolving (new roles, new learning pathways and alternate pathways). The proposed approach will support credentialing and recognition pathways outside of degree accreditation alone, while keeping a clear professional core.
5. **Reduce constitutional rigidity and improve governance flexibility.** Moving the detailed definition of 'type of professional' out of the Constitution allows HIMAA to update standards and recognition in a controlled way through policy and credentialing frameworks as the profession changes.

6. **Improve access and clarity for students and early-career professionals.** Removing employment-status restrictions for Student membership improves fairness and helps HIMAA better understand and serve the student cohort.
7. **Growth for the profession.** Australia needs a growing health information management workforce, attracting the next generation of young professionals, in order to underpin the future healthcare system.

3.2 What is not changing

1. **HIMAA remains a professional association.** The proposal does not shift HIMAA to an industry-association model.
2. **Fellow and Life membership continue.** Recognition pathways for Fellows and Life members remain in place, with terminology updated to align to "Professional member".
3. **Associate and Student categories remain available.** HIMAA continues to welcome those studying or working alongside the profession, and those with an interest in health information.
4. **Member participation continues.** Members across categories can continue to participate in committees, working groups, taskforces and advisory groups, subject to terms of reference and role requirements.
5. **Member governance.** Eligible members will continue to be elected to the HIMAA Board and be responsible for governing HIMAA.

4. What this means in practice

- **For Health Information Managers, Clinical Coders and Clinical Documentation Specialists:** the intent is a more equitable professional identity within membership, with professional occupations recognised as equals while maintaining strong professional standards.
- **For students:** a simpler pathway into membership regardless of employment status, with clearer visibility and support of the student community.
- **For employers and stakeholders:** clearer separation between (a) being part of the HIMAA community and (b) how HIMAA recognises professional standing and domains through standards, credentialing and related frameworks.
- **For future roles:** the model is designed to adapt as the profession evolves, supporting HIMAA to recognise new occupations when appropriate.

5. How to provide feedback

Please provide your feedback by **Friday September 11, 2026** by completing the **member feedback survey**. The HIMAA Board members and CEO are available for a

conversation or to take questions during the consultation period via direct email/contact or by emailing executiveoffice@himaa.org.au.

The HIMAA Board members are Catherine Garvey (SA), Cassie Rupnik (NSW/QLD), Louise Edmonds (ACT), Shane Sanfilippo (QLD), Nicole Payne (VIC), Sally McIntosh (NSW), Tim Nelson (WA), Doug Henry (NSW), and Paul Miles (NSW).

6. What happens next

- **Consultation open:** Monday 24 August, 2026
- **Consultation closes:** Friday 11 September, 2026
- **Board consideration of final proposal:** September 2026
- **Member update:** September/October 2026
- **If progressed:** Member resolution will be included in the AGM agenda to be distributed no later than Wednesday 21 October, followed by a vote by present/proxy eligible members at the HIMAA AGM 11 November 2026 5-6pm AEDT.

If you have questions about this consultation, please contact the CEO Sallyanne Wissmann at executiveoffice@himaa.org.au.