



MEDIA RELEASE
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PATIENTS WIN WITH REFORMS TO MEDICAL REGISTRATION

Proposed reforms to medical registration in Australia could reshape patient access to medical services, improve the availability of doctors into remote and rural areas, and increase consumer access to information about their doctors.

The reform proposals, developed jointly by a working group of the Australian Medical Council, the specialist medical colleges, the community, the AMA, the Australian Council on Standards and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) are being circulated for public comment tomorrow.

Head of the working group and the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, Professor Richard Smallwood, said the reform agenda was being driven by public demand for better information and improved access to services, and the medical profession's commitment to improving safety and quality in healthcare standards.

"This is not just about tinkering around the edges of medical registration reform. This package of changes recognises that the community and the medical profession need to work together to fundamentally reshape access to information and services," Professor Smallwood said.

The Issues Paper launched for public comment today proposes a package of medical registration reforms including:

- ✓ Proposals to streamline the provision of medical services across state boundaries by removing existing barriers and disincentives to providing medical care. (Doctors currently have to be registered separately in every state in which they practice medicine. Under the reform agenda, single national registration would enable a doctor to treat patients anywhere in Australia within their level of competence and training.)
- ✓ Improving consumer access to information about doctors by introducing a publicly accessible, nation-wide specialist medical register which reveals if a doctor is qualified to provide specialist medical care. (Only Queensland and South Australia currently have specialist registers)
- ✓ Initiatives to link continuing professional development with medical registration, to ensure that only doctors who maintain professional standards and undertake continuing medical education are entitled to medical registration

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- ✓ A process to externally review and accredit providers of specialist medical training (such as the learned Colleges)

Professor Smallwood said while some initiatives were being progressed individually in some states, a national perspective would avoid fragmentation of effort and possible inconsistencies in the application of standards.

The Issues Paper detailing the package of reforms is being distributed widely for comment to health consumer groups, state medical registration authorities, specialist medical colleges and the AMA. The final outcome of the consultation process will be a report due to be presented to the Health Ministers' Conference later this year. Implementation may require legislative change in most jurisdictions.

Ends.

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