



Australian Health Ministers' Conference

Communique

18 April 2008

DELIVERING RESULTS

Today's Australian Health Ministers' Conference was an extremely productive meeting, delivering results across several key areas, including **mental health, obesity, national security, tobacco, solariums, and open disclosure.**

Mental Health

The Commonwealth announced it would provide \$15 million funding to improve the mental health workforce, by providing training to around 24,000 mental health professionals.

This initiative had previously been requested by the States and Territories. The training will be provided through 1,200 workshops nationwide.

The Commonwealth will also encourage more flexible working arrangements for mental health nurses.

The flexible working arrangements will allow sharing of mental health nursing resources between state and territory health organisations and participating private practices.

Obesity named a National Health Priority Area

Australian Health Ministers agreed to make obesity a National Health Priority Area. As part of this announcement, one of the first tasks of the National Preventative Health Taskforce will be to develop a National Obesity Strategy.

This is a recognition of the urgent need to tackle the obesity crisis.

Making obesity a National Health Priority Area will:

- Help drive collaborative efforts aimed at tackling obesity at national, local, State and Territory levels
- Ensure that obesity receives the attention it deserves as a matter of urgency

National Health Security Agreement Signed

For the first time today, a national agreement was signed on handling public health emergencies such as major disease outbreaks or bioterrorism attacks.

Previously, public health emergencies have been dealt with on an informal and ad hoc basis. This agreement will ensure clear, quick and coordinated decision-making

in a health emergency.

The Agreement will strengthen Australia's ability to respond to the impacts of health emergencies such as naturally occurring epidemics or terrorist attacks involving chemical, biological and radiological agents, and to implement international treaty obligations.

Flavoured cigarettes

The Australian Health Ministers today agreed to ban the sale and investigate banning the importation of flavoured cigarettes across Australia.

It is unacceptable that children are smoking, and unacceptable that tobacco companies are marketing their products to children.

Solariums

The Ministers agreed to build on Victoria's leadership and adopt the principles for a nationally consistent regulatory scheme for the regulation of the solarium industry in Australia. Ministers also agreed that the Radiation Health Committee develop the details of the regulatory scheme for AHMC to consider in mid-2008.

Open Disclosure

Ministers agreed to work towards implementing an Open Disclosure standard in all health care facilities noting that New South Wales and Queensland already have standards in place.

The standard aims to promote a clear and consistent approach by hospitals and other organisations to open communication with patients and their families following an adverse health care event. This includes a discussion about what has happened, why it happened and what is being done to prevent it from happening again.

This standard will be applied in the interests of a fully open and transparent national health system.

Organ Donation

Ministers endorsed the appointment of Professor John Horvath AO as Chair of the Cognate Committee to progress improvements in the organ and tissue donation and transplantation sectors.

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