



THE HON CHRISTOPHER PYNE MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing

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Australian Government supports reform for complementary medicine

The Australian Government has backed the recommendations contained in a high level review of herbal and other complementary medicines aimed at enhancing the public's confidence in the Australian alternative medicines sector, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Christopher Pyne, said today.

Releasing the Australian Government response to the review undertaken by the Expert Committee on Complementary Medicines in the Health System, Mr Pyne said the supply of safe, high quality and effective complementary medicines, timely access to these medicines, and the maintenance of a responsible and viable complementary medicines industry are important objectives for governments, healthcare practitioners, consumers and industry alike.

“Australia is very fortunate to have such a high quality complementary medicines industry,” Mr Pyne said.

“The Expert Committee provided an incisive and comprehensive evaluation of complementary medicines in Australia and produced recommendations aimed at ensuring that the Australian public has timely access to safe, high quality complementary medicines.

“The complementary medicines industry is estimated to be worth over \$800 million per year so it is vital that Australians feel confident in the industry and its products.

“The response to the Expert Committee's recommendations reinforces the government's prime concern for public health and safety and that Australians are able to have the same level of confidence in the safety and quality of complementary medicines as they can with their other medicines.”

Some of the key actions agreed by the government include:

- The TGA ensures that quality standards for all ingredients for use in complementary medicines are legally enforceable and that the evidence required to be held by companies (sponsors) to substantiate claims be subject to much more rigorous assessment.
- The TGA convene a stakeholder group to identify incentives to encourage innovation and research in complementary medicines, including data protection and market exclusivity.

- The Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council facilitate a consultation process with the complementary medicines sector and other stakeholders to clarify the position of complementary medicines in the National Medicines Policy and the National Strategy for Quality Use of Medicines.
- A database be established to identify researchers and centres of excellence to facilitate complementary medicines research in Australia.
- Homoeopathic medicines and related remedies making therapeutic claims will be regulated to ensure they meet appropriate standards of safety, quality and efficacy.
- That the government take a more active role in ensuring that consumers have access to reliable information about complementary medicines, and the skills to interpret this information to be able to make informed decisions.
- To better integrate adverse events monitoring of complementary medicines action will be taken to create a greater awareness among all health professionals and consumers of the potential for complementary medicines to interact with other medicines, and ensure consumers are better informed about the potential risk of importing medicines for personal use.
- The government will consult to determine the needs and priorities for research into complementary medicines.

Mr Pyne said he was pleased at the positive response from the industry which generally supported improved regulation to ensure safety and quality.

“With the establishment next year of a joint agency to regulate medicines and therapeutic products in both Australia and New Zealand, any proposed implementation action that will bring change to the Australian regulatory environment will require consultation with all affected stakeholders in both countries,” Mr Pyne said.

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