

## **HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT POLICY AND METHODS REVIEW REFERENCE COMMITTEE PRINCIPLES REGARDING CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

The Health Technology Assessment Policy and Methods Review (HTA Review) Reference Committee has agreed the following principles for how it will manage confidentiality and transparency.

The Reference Committee is committed to being transparent in its oversight of the HTA Review while also managing confidential material appropriately.

Members of the HTA Review Reference Committee will maintain confidentiality over information that has either been provided to the HTA Review in confidence or represents interim thinking or evidence that the HTA Review is considering but has not formed a view on. These confidentiality obligations are important in ensuring that the HTA Review is, and can be seen to be, undertaken with integrity and without undue influence from external sources.

At the same time, the Reference Committee has committed to be as transparent as possible to stakeholders in the HTA Review. This commitment reflects a high degree of interest in the HTA Review, as well as an acknowledgement by the HTA Review Reference Committee that transparency will assist in the understanding and acceptance of the HTA Review's findings. Transparency also supports the Reference Committee's access to relevant information at the right time to support its considerations.

Naturally, the balance between confidentiality and transparency is challenging, and requires the exercise of judgement by Reference Committee members. The Reference Committee has agreed these principles to support the exercise of that judgement.

### **1. The key avenue for transparency will be the communique issued after each Reference Committee meeting**

After each Reference Committee meeting, a communique with reasonable detail of matters discussed at the Reference Committee meeting, will be issued publicly. The HTA Review Secretariat will seek to have these finalised as quickly as possible after each meeting. Upon release, these communiqués represent publicly available information.

### **2. Considerations by the Reference Committee, including on evidence being considered, will be maintained as confidential until final agreed positions are reached by the Reference Committee**

The maintenance of confidentiality of considerations of the Reference Committee is designed to ensure that stakeholders are not misled about the findings of the HTA Review through the release of interim considerations which may not be finalised. Such misleading information can create harm for stakeholders as well as damage the credibility of the Reference Committee and the HTA Review.

Where there are submissions or papers that the Reference Committee agrees should be published, in consultation with authors, these will be excluded from the above principle.

### **3. Personal opinions of Reference Committee members will be communicated with care**

The Reference Committee acknowledges positions taken publicly on matters related to HTA may be perceived (rightly or wrongly) as positions of the Reference Committee or the HTA Review more broadly. Reference Committee members will avoid taking positions where possible or will clearly preface any statements by advising that those statements are personal statements or statements that represent the view of another organisation and do not represent the views or conclusions of the HTA Review or the Reference Committee.

### **4. All evidence received by the Reference Committee will be treated as confidential unless the provider denotes that it is not confidential**

Evidence received by the HTA Review, whether from stakeholders, or from commercial organisations, is being sought with a commitment to confidentiality in order to encourage the most honest and objective evidence possible. Accordingly, Reference Committee members will not share evidence provided to them by others. Exceptions to this is where providers of evidence authorise its release or for statements referencing the evidence to be made or where the Committee is seeking broader consultation views, for example from representative organisations such as industry or patient communities. Submissions received in response to a call for submissions, will be treated consistent with commitments made in the call for submissions, which are consistent with the Department's obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*.

### **5. Reference Committee members will elicit input from stakeholders through use of probing questions or formal HTA Review issues papers (and other consultation tools)**

Reference Committee members are not precluded from seeking or receiving input from stakeholders, without disclosing positions of the HTA Review (as noted in Principle 2 above). This may be through asking questions or using consultation tools being used more broadly by the HTA Review.

When such input is received, the stakeholders will be encouraged to also provide the input more formally through the formal consultation channels.

When having such discussions with stakeholders, Reference Committee members will take care to ensure that conversations do not state or allude to positions being taken by the Reference Committee or individual members of the Reference Committee.