



# **Health Ministers Meeting (HMM): *Communique* 1 September 2023**

**Health Ministers from all Australian governments met on 1 September 2023 to discuss a range of important issues for Australia’s healthcare system. These include workforce and regulatory reforms to cosmetic surgery, medical college accreditation of specialist training sites, responses to allegations of boundary violations by health practitioners, and the regulation of vaping and e-cigarettes.**

## **Cosmetic surgery reform**

Health Ministers have committed to reforming cosmetic surgery in Australia to ensure that safety and quality in procedures, from advertising through to after-care. In September 2022, Health Ministers tasked the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) to review and develop national licensing standards for the safe delivery of high-quality cosmetic procedures as part of the reform work. Ministers were joined by the CEO of the ACSQHC who reported on the development of national standards. Ministers approved the National Safety and Quality Cosmetic Surgery Standards, and the National Licensing Framework for Cosmetic Surgery. State and territory governments will implement regulatory powers within the Licensing Framework as soon as practical, and a mechanism will be established between state and territory regulators, the Australian Government, and the Medical Board of Australia to support implementation. Health agencies will implement the Cosmetic Surgery Standards, and work to develop an accreditation process against these standards to better support high quality and safe care for clients and patients accessing cosmetic procedures.

## **Australian Medical Colleges and accreditation of training sites**

In July 2023, Health Ministers met with representatives of the Australian Medical Council (AMC) and a number of Australian Medical Colleges to discuss current challenges in the accreditation of training sites. In response, Ministers have now approved a Policy Direction to Ahpra and the Medical Board of Australia about expectations of the AMC and Colleges regarding accreditation of training sites. Ministers also noted that a Collaboration Framework between the AMC, Colleges and all jurisdictions is being developed to ensure that accreditation decisions are properly consulted and communicated with jurisdictions. This will help to ensure ongoing safety and quality and equity of access to services for patients.

## **Responses to allegations of boundary violations by health practitioners**

Health Ministers remain committed to taking urgent action to address concerns that allegations of boundary violations by health practitioners were not being managed in a way consistent with community expectations. Health Ministers were joined by the CEO of Ahpra, who discussed the implementation of Ahpra’s [\*Blueprint to improve public safety in health regulation\*](#). Ministers agreed to the development of a National Law Amendment Bill that will include reinstatement orders and expand the information on the national public registers to include regulatory history of practitioners

in respect to any boundary violations in the course of practice or a criminal conviction for a sexual offence. Health Ministers agree that the safety of patients and the community is paramount in accessing care, and that all allegations of misconduct must be dealt with appropriately and sensitively.

### **Vaping and e-cigarettes**

Health Ministers are committed to enhancing regulation of e-Cigarettes and vapes. In February Ministers agreed to establish a time-limited working group which was tasked to develop option to regulate or prohibit e-Cigarettes. In June, this group was tasked by Ministers to draft an implementation plan to support the National Response to Vaping. Ministers were updated on the implementation plan in this meeting and agreed to extend the operation of the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 to restrict the importation, manufacture, and supply of all vapes. The Commonwealth Government will lead the enforcement of new importation and manufacturing controls, advertising controls and controls on therapeutic vapes, while states and territories will lead the enforcement efforts at the point of wholesale and retail. Ministers acknowledged that the involvement of Police and law enforcement agencies would be critical and that a meeting of Health and Police Ministers should be scheduled as soon as practical.

### **Cochlear Implants**

Health Ministers discussed the independent review into the SA paediatric cochlear program that was released 21 August 2023 and noted that Queensland is expected to release their report of Townsville's paediatric cochlear implant program in October 2023. Health Ministers agreed to task health officials to urgently advise on actions post consideration of the South Australia and Queensland reports to ensure that recommendations can be actioned quickly.