



Health Ministers Meeting (HMM): Communique 16 August 2024 - Sydney

Health Ministers met in Sydney today to discuss a range of important issues including health reform, the national COVID inquiry, mental health and suicide prevention, and family, domestic and sexual violence. Health Ministers also met with members from all Australian Medical Council registered Colleges and other health workforce stakeholders to collaborate on key areas to grow and sustain the health workforce in Australia.

National Health Reform Agreement Addendum negotiations (NHRA)

Health Ministers were updated on State and Territories progress on their proposal for a new NHRA Addendum. Health Ministers are committed to progressing the NHRA negotiations in tandem with disability reform. A pause in negotiations is currently in place to allow disability reform to develop. Health officials will meet with Disability officials in the coming weeks to ensure Australia is equipped to address additional challenges that people living with a disability have in accessing health services.

All jurisdictions remain focused on ensuring Australians receive the care and support they need. To this end, Ministers are committed to finalising as soon as possible a national agreement to commence from 1 July 2025.

National COVID inquiry

Health Ministers met with Ms Robyn Kruk AO, the Chair of the independent Inquiry Panel into Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers were updated on the progress of the inquiry including emerging themes. Health Ministers look forward to the final report, particularly in the context of the establishment of the Australian Centre for Disease Control.

Workforce Reform

Health Ministers met today with representatives of all sixteen specialist medical colleges, the Australian Medical Council (AMC), the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), the Medical Board of Australia (MBA), and the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO). Health Ministers discussed progress on reforms and improvements for the medical specialist workforce in Australia.

The discussion focused on improving training site-accreditation processes and implementing the priorities of the Kruk Review including establishing fast-track registration pathways and streamlined assessment processes for specialist international medical graduates (SIMGs). Ministers also explored ongoing challenges with medical workforce distribution across Australia as identified in the National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031.

Health Ministers and attendees committed to continue working on strategies that would grow, distribute and sustain the workforce, supporting Australians to access the care they need, when and where they need it. Actions included:

- Specialist medical colleges and the AMC will continue to implement the recommendations of the NHPO's report into site accreditation reform, including developing model accreditation standards.
- Specialist medical colleges will continue to work with jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders, on strategies to deliver the medical workforce in the right numbers and in the right locations, particularly in rural and regional areas.
- Specialist medical colleges will continue to work with jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders, to build the generalist capability of the medical workforce.
- The meeting committed to continue sharing workforce distribution, supply and demand data to provide an evidence base for national workforce planning.
- Specialist medical colleges, the AMC, Ahpra and the MBA will continue to develop and implement expedited pathways for SIMGs, reducing the wait time to receive an outcome regarding their competency and ability to work in Australia's health system.

Registration fees for health workers on parental leave

Health Ministers met with Martin Fletcher, CEO of Ahpra, to discuss options to make registration more affordable for health practitioners on parental leave. Ahpra is reviewing its registration fee arrangements for registered health practitioners taking periods of parental leave and agreed to report back to Health Ministers as a priority on this work.

Mental Health

Health and Mental Health Ministers met today to discuss the key issues affecting Australia's mental health system and further options for reform. The Joint Health and Mental Health Ministers' Communique can be found [here](#).

Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

The Prime Minister requested that all Health Ministers work to enhance healthcare workers' knowledge of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence. Health Ministers have agreed to implement actions proposed by Ahpra to improve responses to Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Health. The Commonwealth will explore the merits of making health practitioners mandatory reporters of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Spinal manipulation of children under two years of age

Health Ministers received an update regarding the Chiropractic Board of Australia's reinstatement of a pause on the spinal manipulation of children under two years of age. The Chiropractic Board will undertake further consultation and evidence gathering before providing a recommendation to Health Ministers.

IV Fluid Shortage

Health Ministers acknowledged the current IV Fluid Shortage being experienced across the country. Health Ministers received an update based on the advice of the urgently established working group coordinating the national response. Health Ministers released a joint statement on the IV Fluid Shortage. The joint statement can be found [here](#).

Use of the title of ‘Oral Surgeon’

Health Ministers have agreed to refer the use of the title of ‘Oral Surgeon’ to the AHPRA for consideration and advice, to ensure patients and consumers have a clear understanding of the skills and qualifications of the practitioners providing them care.