



Health Ministers Meeting (HMM):

Communique

4 September 2026

Health Ministers met in Sydney today to discuss the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, health system reform priorities including the 2026-31 NHRA National Health Reform Strategy, hospital discharge, and prescribing scope of practice for health professionals.

National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement

Health Ministers and Mental Health Ministers discussed the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (National Agreement). Ministers acknowledged the valuable contributions from the sector and people with lived experience. Ministers agreed to continue working together on the National Agreement for further discussion at their next meeting in December. This meeting will include representatives from the Mental Health sector.

Hospital Discharge

Ministers received an update from the Secretary-led Hospital Discharge Joint Taskforce (Taskforce), established following their May meeting. The Taskforce agreed an 18-month work program. It will focus on six priority workstreams to address delayed discharge and improve patient flow. The work program is informed by stakeholder perspectives and jurisdictional experience. Initial work will explore options to better utilise already funded aged care capacity and to improve care and discharge pathways for people with dementia and related complex needs. Ministers requested ongoing updates as the Taskforce progresses its work as quickly as possible.

Health Ministers agreed to a revised national definition for Delayed Discharge of an Older Person. This will support nationally consistent data on older people experiencing delayed discharge from public hospitals. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will undertake further work to implement the definition. This includes developing data standards and refining national data collection. The AIHW will report implementation progress to the Taskforce every six months.

Health Ministers noted this is a critical first step. It will build a national picture of older people experiencing delayed discharge from hospitals.

Health Ministers expressed concern on data from states and territories on delayed discharge of older patients ready for discharge which has continued to grow at an unprecedented rate.

2026 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable

Health Ministers reflected on their meeting yesterday with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collaboration members, and First Nations health leaders to discuss priorities for health system reform. Ministers acknowledge and respect the depth of experience and leadership that this sector offers and are committed to continuing to work in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of First Nations people. Ministers also acknowledged the contribution made by the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations at the Roundtable.

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to Schedule B of the 2026-31 National Health Reform Agreement to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to continue to work together to achieve real improvements to the health and wellbeing of First Nations people in places of detention and upon their release. Ministers also noted the significance of the next National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and the need to also focus on First Nations communities. Ministers also noted an inequity of access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people requiring kidney transplants and asked the Collaboration to develop options to improve access for consideration in early 2027.

2026-31 NHRA National Health Reform Strategy

Health Ministers endorsed the 2026-31 National Health Reform Strategy (NHRS). The NHRS sets out a shared vision, priorities and key deliverables to guide implementation of the 2026-31 National Health Reform Agreement. It reinforces Health Ministers' commitment to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and outlines how governments will measure progress. The NHRS will be published on the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website.

Productivity and Implementation of NHRA

Health Ministers discussed ways to enhance productivity across the health system. These opportunities aim to drive further value and achieve improved health outcomes for all Australians. Ministers considered opportunities outlined in the National Health Reform Agreement 2026-31 to address the growing pressures in the public hospital system. Ministers asked officials to provide advice on any further structural reform opportunities at their next meeting.

Optimising scope of practice for health professionals to include prescribing practice

Health Ministers agreed to update the AHMAC Guidance for National Boards on scheduled medicines under section 14 of the National Law. Ministers noted the benefits of expanding scope of practice to increase equity of access for communities. Ministers agreed to develop for consideration a National Decision-Making Framework to promote national consistency in prescribing scope of practice.

Interim Funding Arrangements for New Bleeding Disorder Therapies

Health Ministers agreed to interim funding for three bleeding disorder therapies Obizur, Hemgenix and Alhemo through the National Blood Arrangements. This follows assessment and recommendation by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC). Ministers noted that these

therapies improve access to treatment for Australians with bleeding disorders. Ministers also noted that a time-limited working group has been established to consider future access arrangements for emerging therapeutic products.

Improving Health Practitioner Response to racism and discrimination

Health Ministers noted action by Ahpra and the National Boards in response to the Ministerial Policy Direction 2025-1: *Improving the health practitioner response to racism and discrimination, including antisemitism*. Ahpra's response outlined progress over the six months following the direction. Ahpra will improve notifications processes for practitioners and notifiers, and to ensure registered health practitioners engage in appropriate education and training.

Ahpra will provide ongoing six-monthly progress reports on outcomes to Health Ministers, with the next report due in December 2026.

Oral Health and Dental Reform

Health Ministers agreed to establish a National Oral Health and Dental Reform Senior Officials Group to progress dental health reform as a national priority.