



COAG Health Council

COMMUNIQUE

17 April 2015

The Federal and State and Territory Health Ministers met in Sydney today at the COAG Health Council to discuss a range of national health issues.

Chaired by the NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, topics included health workforce programs, accreditation for health care professionals, health performance and pricing, clinical trial planning and management of the risk of Ebola virus disease in Australia. Ministers also took the opportunity to discuss the recent Review of Mental Health Services released by the Commonwealth.

Major items discussed included:

Release of the Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services

Ministers took the opportunity to explore some of the recommendations of the recently released Mental Health Review with all ministers welcoming the announcement that the Federal Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, had rejected the recommendation to move a billion dollars of mental health funding out of public hospital services.

Ministers agreed to work cooperatively with the Commonwealth on a national approach through the COAG Health Council to progress a response to the recommendations of the Review.

A National Code of Conduct for health care workers

Ministers considered the final report *A National Code of Conduct for health care workers* and the results of a national consultation on standards of conduct for all health care workers who are not registered under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health practitioners. The Report is being released today.

Ministers agreed to the terms of the first National Code of Conduct for health care workers, which will set standards of conduct and practice for all unregistered health care workers. Ministers agreed that jurisdictions would now examine the implementation of the National Code and code-regulation regime.

Persons holding themselves out to be registered health professionals.

Ministers agreed to refer the issue of registration verification to the Health Workforce Principal Committee for that committee's advice on the veracity of the current registration verification system, and any potential system improvement opportunities.

The Independent Review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Health Professionals:

Health Ministers were briefed on the final Report of the NRAS Review, conducted by Mr Kim Snowball, the former Director General of WA Health. The NRAS Review comprised an extensive consultation process which included over 230 written submissions and the involvement of more than 1000 individuals in consultation forums held in each capital city.

Given the wide ranging nature of the NRAS Review and the importance on the National Scheme to the health system, Health Ministers have requested time to consider the recommendations from the NRAS Review in detail and have agreed to consider each of the recommendations at their meeting in August 2015.

Registration of Paramedics

COAG Health Council is in the process of considering a proposal for national registration of paramedics in Australia with a proviso that individual states have the option of not being included. WA will now develop the proposal to the next meeting of COAG Health Council subject to the regulatory impact statement.

Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support (Project Agreement)

Health Ministers discussed the impending expiry of the Project Agreement and the impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people if funding for initiatives under the Project Agreement does not continue beyond 30 June 2015. The Project Agreement seeks to support delivery of pre-pregnancy, antenatal, sexual and reproductive health services and programmes for young Indigenous Australians. States and Territories have sought a commitment from the Commonwealth to provide ongoing funding towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenage sexual, reproductive health and young parent support initiatives

Management of the risk of Ebola virus disease in Australia

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments have worked closely together to minimise Australia's risk to Ebola and ensure that Australia is prepared to quickly respond and treat a case should one occur.

National guidelines are in place for public health management of a person with Ebola, and new infection prevention and control guidelines have been developed outlining the appropriate use of personal protective equipment in healthcare settings.

Privately Practising Midwives

Ministers agreed to extend the current exemption for Professional Indemnity Insurance for midwives in private practice providing intra-partum care for women who choose to have home birth to December 31 2016 while further work is being undertaken.

Chair of the COAG Health Council

SA Minister for Health, Jack Snelling, was elected the incoming chair of the COAG Health Council. The Council members paid tribute to the outgoing Chair, NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, for her dedicated efforts.

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