



Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council

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Senator the Hon. Rachel Siewert MP
Chair
Senate Community Affairs References Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Siewert

Re: Senate Inquiry into Health Practitioner complaints mechanisms administered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law

I am writing to you on behalf of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) in relation to the Senate Inquiry into Health Practitioner complaints mechanisms administered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law).

AHMAC is currently overseeing significant reforms to the National Law that aim to strengthen and improve the operation of the health practitioner regulatory framework, and most importantly to strengthen public protections to ensure patients receive safe, ethical and competent care. Health Ministers consider these reforms to be a high priority, particularly those aimed at improving consumer safety.

A key component of this regulatory framework is a fair, efficient, transparent and accessible process for the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to receive and address complaints or concerns raised by members of the public and health practitioners about registered health professionals.

AHPRA is continuing its work to improve the complaints process under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. AHMAC is confident that this process is functioning effectively, and is advised by AHPRA about the very low numbers of complaints from health practitioners regarding the notifications process. AHMAC continues to monitor the level of complaints from health practitioners.

I wish to advise the Senate Committee that consultation commenced on 6 February 2017 on the draft Bill titled *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Amendment Law 2017*. I enclose a summary of the draft Bill for the Committee's information. Particular references to work on strengthening the notifications process are at paragraph 33 of the summary, and item numbers 18 to 30 in Attachment 1 of the draft Bill.

Once the draft Bill is enacted by Health Ministers further improvements to the National Law will be considered as part of the second tranche of amendments. This is due to commence later in 2017 and will require a separate public consultation process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this Senate Inquiry. AHMAC looks forward to seeing the final report in May 2017.

Please contact Ms Barbara Levings, AHMAC Secretary on (08) 8226 6191 or email HealthCHCSecretariat@sa.gov.au if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Michael Walsh
Chair
Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council
23 February 2017

Encl.: Summary of the draft Bill *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Amendments Law 2017*.