



## COAG Health Council

### Communique November 6 2015

The Federal and State and Territory Health Ministers met in Adelaide today at the COAG Health Council to discuss a range of national health issues. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Jack Snelling, Minister for Health, South Australia.

#### **Major items discussed by Health Ministers today included:**

##### **Healthier Medicare Initiatives:**

The Commonwealth Minister for Health Sussan Ley outlined to Ministers the progress of the two major *Healthier Medicare* initiatives - the Review of Primary Health Care by the Primary Health Care Advisory Group and the Review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) by the MBS Review Taskforce – both of which will identify potential opportunities for system wide reform of the health system.

The Primary Health Care Advisory Group is developing options to improve primary health care for patients with chronic and complex health conditions including mental illness. This work also aligns with parallel consideration of options for individualised care packages for people with chronic health conditions through the Reform of the Federation discussion by COAG.

The Medicare Review Taskforce is a clinician led systematic review of the MBS to reflect the technological and healthcare needs of today. It aims to modernise the system by addressing outdated and inappropriate services and investing in services that are appropriate for improved health outcomes, and develop a system of ongoing review in order to keep the MBS current over time.

Ministers noted that the Medicare Review Taskforce is currently consulting publicly with consumers and stakeholders on the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce Consultation Paper released on 27 September 2015.

States and Territories have been actively engaged as key stakeholders in the Commonwealth's Healthier Medicare processes and the final report from the Primary Health Care Advisory Group and an interim report from the Medicare Review Taskforce are anticipated by the Commonwealth in late 2015.

## **Options for national registration of the paramedic profession**

Health Ministers discussed options for the registration of paramedics and, on a majority vote, the meeting agreed to move towards a national registration of paramedics to be included in the National Registration Accreditation Scheme with only those jurisdictions that wish to register paramedics adopting the necessary amendments. Ministers agreed that work would need to come back to AHMAC for consideration. This would include the consideration of implementation of the recommendations of the NRAS Review, resolution of the scope of the paramedic workforce and the development of vocational as well as tertiary pathways. It was noted that NSW will reserve its right to participate. The Commonwealth dissented from the decisions as it is not consistent with the principles of the NRAS as a national regulatory reform.

## **Sustainable Health Reform: policy and funding challenges**

Queensland presented a paper to ministers on health reform noting the current challenges facing the health system and the potential financial and service delivery impacts of declining National Partnership Payments and the move to an indexation formula based on growth in population and the CPI from 2017–18.

Ministers noted the range of initiatives currently underway and in recognition of COAG Health Council's critical role Ministers agreed that AHMAC discuss the current range of national health reform initiatives and provide an update at the first CHC meeting in 2016 including potential opportunities for a nationally coordinated approach to an improved health care system in Australia.

## **Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016–2020**

Ministers noted the Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016–2020, endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) and anticipated for public release by the end of the year. The Strategy seeks to inform how existing resources can be better coordinated and targeted across all levels of government, and to prioritise the national response and existing resources through an emphasis on prevention, early diagnosis and intervention, management and treatment. The Council noted that implementation of the Strategy will commence in conjunction with states and territories through AHMAC and related Principal Committees.

## **Review of Medical Intern Training final Report**

Ministers considered the final report of the Review of Medical Intern Training and noted that work will be undertaken on the feasibility, prioritisation and sequencing of implementation of the Review recommendations.

This work will be progressed by the Health Workforce Principal Committee through a Working Group consisting of all state and territory Postgraduate Medical Councils, the Medical Board of Australia, the Australian Medical Council and jurisdictions. The outcome of this work will be provided to the COAG Health Council in the first half of 2016 which will enable it to consider its formal response to the report recommendations. The final report is available on the COAG Health Council website <http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au>

## **Management of global medicine shortages**

Ministers discussed the impact on the health of the community when medicine shortages occur. Ministers noted that the Commonwealth Government has a number of systems to minimise the impact of medicine shortages including a website and industry reporting protocol as well as enabling regulatory approvals for the import of alternative medicines at short notice. Despite these controls, community and hospital pharmacies still deal with medicine shortage situations on a day to day basis.

## **Accessibility of vaccines nationally**

Ministers noted a number of recent vaccine shortages outside of the National Immunisation Program, which resulted in delays in accessing certain vaccines in the private market.

Ministers noted the various reasons for disrupted supply to the Australian market. These include increased global demand for a particular product due to disease outbreak or introduction of new vaccination programs; anomalies to manufacturing processes leading to decreased production; and/or shortages of ingredients needed to make products. It was noted that the Commonwealth is undertaking an evaluation of the Medicines Shortages Information Initiative and jurisdictions will have the opportunity to provide input into this evaluation and a report will be provided to CHC through AHMAC.

## **Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation**

Health Ministers considered the first edition of the Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation (the Atlas) developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. The Atlas analyses selected health-related data across different geographic areas of Australia and, in the future, may help serve as a catalyst for debates about what constitutes “best care” in the Australian health system. Health Ministers have asked the Australian Health Ministers’ Advisory Council to work closely with the Commission to develop a response to the publication.

## **Ice – An opportunity for national collaboration**

Queensland provided an update on the work they are doing to combat the drug ice. Noting the work of the National Ice Taskforce to date, Ministers noted:

- progress of work of National Taskforce on Ice.
- the list of local strategies to address Ice.
- that services funded under the Commonwealth’s Non-Government Organisation Treatment Grants Program and Substance Misuse Service Delivery Grants Fund have been extended until 30 June 2016 and the Commonwealth will provide advice on future funding arrangements for services well before the end of June 2016.

- Queensland Government's recent release of a discussion paper to combat Ice and announcement of the immediate rollout of new frontline treatment initiatives to respond to ice.
- the Commonwealth has yet to progress consultations with states and territories following the July 2014 completion of New Horizons: The Review of alcohol and other drug treatment services in Australia Report. The Commonwealth will be working with jurisdictions to develop a National Ice Action Strategy following release of the Final Report of the National Ice Taskforce and will consider the New Horizons Report in that context.

**Queensland Government response to the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, 'Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland' report**

Ministers were briefed on the work in Queensland to implement the recommendations of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, chaired by The Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO, in their report 'Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland'. Ministers noted the recent Australian Government announcement of funding for domestic and family violence initiatives and work being undertaken in other jurisdictions and agreed to work collaboratively to implement a coordinated response.

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