

## Media statement

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16 April 2013

### AHPRA and Medical Board to work with Queensland on change

AHPRA and the Medical Board of Australia will work with Health Minister Lawrence Springborg to improve health complaints management in Queensland.

National AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher and Medical Board of Australia National Chair, Dr Joanna Flynn AM, acknowledged the value of the scrutiny of the Review Panel chaired by Dr Forrester and the methodical way in which the Panel had identified a set of serious concerns.

“The Review Panel has demonstrated that processes to manage health complaints in Queensland have not been working well enough,” Mr Fletcher said.

“We are committed to making the changes necessary to keep the public safe,” he said.

AHPRA and the Board have already significantly increased resources in Queensland to manage the backlog of complaints transferred from the former Queensland Medical Board to the new national health practitioner arrangements. Two thirds of the matters of concern to the Review Panel predate the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, including the cases with the longest timelines.

“While the report points to evidence of improvements under the National Scheme, it is clear that more needs to be done to address the identified shortcomings as quickly as possible, particularly in terms of timeliness, consistency of decision making and appropriate application of regulatory sanctions,” Dr Flynn said.

The Review Report also highlights the importance of better co-operation between all agencies involved in complaints management in Queensland. An important element of this is now in place with AHPRA Queensland and the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia meeting regularly with the Health Quality and Complaints Commission to better coordinate work to assess and set priorities for serious complaints.

“As regulators, AHPRA and the Board must operate within the privacy and confidentiality requirements of the National Law”, Mr Fletcher said.

“There were legal constraints that stopped us simply handing over individual files to the Minister. We worked with the Minister to address these issues to agree on a process that involved the Minister appointing independent reviewers, contracted by AHPRA. The Medical Board of Australia funded the work of Jeffrey Hunter SC and the Review Panel,” Dr Flynn said.

Both review reports acknowledge the full cooperation they received from AHPRA in having access to all the information they needed.

Medical Boards across Australia are meeting this week and the important issues raised by the Report will be discussed.

“Under the law, decision makers must balance what will keep the public safe, with the need to support public access to health services,” Dr Flynn said.

The Queensland Minister appoints the members of the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia, which includes four community members.

*For more information*

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