



Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander health practice  
Chinese medicine  
Chiropractic  
Dental  
Medical  
Medical radiation practice  
Nursing and Midwifery  
Occupational therapy  
Optometry  
Osteopathy  
Pharmacy  
Physiotherapy  
Podiatry  
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

## Statement

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25 August 2016

### Our recommendations to improve the Health Complaints Management System in Queensland

AHPRA and the National Boards' joint submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Queensland Health Ombudsman's (OHO) functions has been [published](#).

The current health service complaints management system has now been in operation in Queensland for just over two years. It was intended to introduce a better system for health complaints management with greater transparency and accountability and improved timeliness in achieving an outcome.

While there are strengths to be found in the current model, there are significant areas that require urgent attention and improvements that cannot be achieved without change.

The Boards and AHPRA identify key concerns supported by data and case studies:

- serious matters that pose a risk to the public are not being dealt with in a timely or appropriate way by the OHO
- matters that are considered minor by the OHO are closed or not accepted without any consideration by or referral to the Boards and AHPRA
- the current model and its implementation is costing more, using more resources, and is likely to result in increased registration fees for Queensland-based registered health practitioners, and
- the current model presents a conflict of interest for the OHO being both a partner in regulation and having oversight of AHPRA and Boards' performance.

Therefore, in our joint submission, AHPRA and the National Boards recommend specific changes be made to the model in Queensland.

If our recommendations are acted on, Queenslanders, through the Health Minister and Queensland Parliament, would be assured that our regulatory expertise and that of the OHO as an ombudsman and health complaints authority, is applied in the best possible way to protect the Queensland public. Our respective resources would be used more effectively as the unnecessary delays and duplication in our roles would be addressed.

A changed model would include the following features.

- The OHO would continue to be the 'single front door' in Queensland for receiving all health related complaints and for dealing with matters about unregistered practitioners or health service and systems issues.
- Through a new joint consideration process between the OHO and AHPRA, based on the current requirements in all other states and territories, health service complaints would be efficiently streamed to the body most appropriate to deal with them effectively. This should ensure Boards and AHPRA have full visibility of all complaints about registered health practitioners, including those that are less

serious but may form a pattern of complaints that Boards can identify as a predictor of a higher risk incident in the future if not addressed.

- The OHO would remain responsible for complaints that are appropriate for conciliation, local resolution or referral to another body with jurisdiction to deal with the matter.
- A single track for health, conduct and performance complaints about registered health practitioners would be introduced, with AHPRA and the Boards taking carriage of all these matters, including for the most serious allegations that require immediate action and referral to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- OHO would continue to have an oversight role for the performance of AHPRA and the Boards' management of complaints about registered health practitioners, and for assurance reporting.

We remain committed to working with the OHO, the Queensland Government and the Health Minister to make the health complaints management system in Queensland work as efficiently and effectively as possible to protect the public in Queensland.

AHPRA and the National Boards will be providing evidence to the Queensland Parliamentary Committee inquiry at a public hearing on Wednesday 31 August.

#### **For more information**

- Media inquiries: (03) 8708 9200
- [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au)