



27 March 2023

Ms Sohpie Dunstone
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee

Via Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dunstone,

Response to information provided by the 'People's Terms of Reference'

Thank you for providing the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (**Ahpra**) the opportunity to inform the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Reference Committee in response to a concern raised by the 'People's Terms of Reference'.

I have previously provided information to the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee on a number of occasions in response to the same issue.

On 9 March 2021, the National Boards for the 16 health professions regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme issued a joint position statement to explain and clarify the application of existing professional obligations as expressed in codes of conduct and other regulatory frameworks in the context of the emerging Covid 19 pandemic. The statement did not create any new restrictions or obligations, but rather explained how these obligations which pre-dated the pandemic, applied in the specific context of the pandemic and the public health response.

Essentially, the position statement reminded registered health practitioners of their obligation to use their professional judgement and best available evidence in providing information and care to patients and the public about public health issues such as Covid-19 and vaccination.

The primary concern of National Boards and Ahpra is the safety of the public. Health practitioner regulation in Australia aims to ensure that the public can have confidence that they will receive safe, effective and evidence based care and information from registered health practitioners.

Neither Ahpra nor the National Boards have released any advice adversely impacting on the rights of patients to be informed and make choices about their health care. Our position was, and continues to be, that patient decision-making should be informed by the best possible scientific evidence available.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

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Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.