



Standing Council on Health
(meeting as Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council)

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Dr Joanna Flynn
Chair
Medical Board of Australia
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Dear Dr Flynn

Thank you for your letter of 20 July 2012, recommending that the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC) approves the proposed registration standard for endorsement of registration for acupuncture.

I am pleased to advise that pursuant to Section 12 of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act*, as in force in each State and Territory, the AHWMC decided on Friday 9 November 2012 to approve the proposed registration standard.

The AHWMC notes that acupuncture is widely accepted as a treatment modality that some medical practitioners provide, and accordingly their patients may receive a Medicare rebate from medical practitioners providing acupuncture services. Ministers noted the advice from the Board that the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the CMBA) does not support the registration standard for medical practitioners, and that this view reflects the polarised views of medical and osteopathy stakeholders, and Chinese medicine stakeholders on the practice of acupuncture by these two professions.

In approving the registration standard, Ministers noted that implementing a registration standard for medical practitioners would provide a clear basis for decision-making by the Board for granting this endorsement, allow these medical practitioners to lawfully use the title 'acupuncturist' when delivering this treatment, and provide for the protection of the public by ensuring that this endorsement can only be granted to medical practitioners with general and/or specialist registration who have approved qualifications and/or who can demonstrate recency of practice in acupuncture.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme provides all National Boards with an opportunity to collaborate on matters of shared interest, particularly with a view to ensure public interest protection. The national regulation of Chinese medicine as a profession from 1 July 2012 means that, for the first time, the title 'acupuncturist' is restricted for use by registered Chinese medicine practitioners and other registered health practitioners (including medical practitioners) who are granted an endorsement on their registration for acupuncture.

Ministers consider it is timely now that protection of title has taken effect, to request that AHPRA works with both the Medical Board and the CMBA to develop information for the public to improve their understanding of the delivery of this treatment by 'registered acupuncturists' (Chinese medicine practitioners) and those with an endorsement (eg registered medical practitioners).

We trust that the AHWMC's approval will enable the Board to implement, as soon as practicable, the proposed registration standard and develop and implement supporting information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle O'Byrne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michelle O'Byrne
Chair
Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council

28 November 2012

cc: Director Board Services AHPRA, Chris.Robertson@ahpra.gov.au