

Health Professions Accreditation Councils' Forum

A coalition of the accreditation Councils of the regulated health professions.

Accreditation Councils response to the independent review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

The Health Professions Accreditation Councils' Forum (the Forum), a coalition of the eleven independent accreditation councils for regulated health professions, welcomes the release of the report of the independent review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme represents a significant legislative and regulatory achievement. It places the accreditation of programs of study in 14 health professions in a strong legal framework which defines accreditation functions, and the responsibilities of accreditation authorities and the national regulation boards for each profession. A quality framework and accreditation service agreements further define the work of accreditation authorities on behalf of national boards, and set requirements for stakeholder input and regular reporting by accreditation authorities.

Members of the Forum are committed to the Scheme's evolution and improvement, taking account of the evidence available on whether the Scheme is meeting its objectives.

The review report raises issues concerning accreditation processes and the costs of accreditation and, in response, Health Ministers have asked for further advice and a comprehensive review of accreditation functions.

Accreditation councils have contributed to several reviews since the Scheme began in 2010, including a review of the work of each accreditation council in 2012, and this Review of the Scheme overall. Forum members are committed to demonstrating the effectiveness and efficiency of the accreditation processes in Australia as part of the proposed new review. Chair of the Forum, Professor Mike Morgan said "By their very nature, accreditation councils support continuous quality improvement. Through the Forum, accreditation councils share good practice, and identify and address common accreditation challenges. We look forward to clarifying issues that have led to concerns and to contribute to improvement of the Scheme."

The costs of accreditation vary between the 14 professions in the Scheme, reflecting the education and training pathways in the profession, and the complexity of the professions, education providers and programs of study. The implementation of the Scheme has itself imposed additional costs on accreditation processes. The Forum members dispute the accuracy of the costs quoted and look forward to an opportunity to clarify the costs and benefits of accreditation.

The legislation governing the Scheme defines a number of functions as accreditation, including some that do not relate to the assessment, monitoring and accrediting of specific programs of study. Professor Morgan said "We are very keen to contribute to a better understanding of which costs relate to which specific functions and to assisting the reviewers to more accurately attribute costs. While all Councils welcome opportunities for achieving greater cost efficiency, it must be remembered that the cost of accreditation is small in relation to benefits and the costs of the Scheme itself. There is a direct link between the work of the accreditation councils and the safety of patients."

About the Forum

The Forum is a coalition of the eleven independent accreditation councils for regulated professions which began meeting in 2007 to discuss issues of national importance to the regulated health professions particularly in the area of accreditation of education, training and continuing professional development.

Each of the Councils is appointed under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law) as the accreditation authority for the relevant profession-specific National Board and is part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

Accreditation is an important quality assurance and quality improvement mechanism for health practitioner education and training. Under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme it is the key quality assurance mechanism to ensure that graduates completing approved programs of study have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise the relevant profession in Australia.

Contact: Professor Michael Morgan, Chair, Health Professions Accreditation Councils' *Forum*
Email info@healthprofessionscouncils.org.au Phone 0400 546 765

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