

ATMS POSITION STATEMENT

Government Registration of Naturopaths, Herbalists, Nutritionists and Homeopaths

Preamble

The ATMS is of the view that government registration for natural medicine practitioners of naturopathy, nutritionist, homeopathy and medical herbalism is neither justified nor achievable.

Advantages

Following are the advantages of both continued industry regulation and government registration:

Claimed Advantages of Industry regulation

- Education standards set by the Industry
- Industry driven professional development
- Lower fee structure for association accreditation
- No additional AHPRA registration fee
- Lower professional Indemnity insurance
- Allows practice in the principles of traditional medicine
- Minimal intervention in marketing
- Endorses known safe traditional eclectic practices
- Lower business costs
- Advocacy for the natural medicine industry
- Promotion of the natural medicine occupations

Claimed Advantages of Government Registration

- More public recognition
- Registration Board sets minimum education standards
- Protection of title
- Funding for services e.g. Medicare
- Recognition by mainstream medicine
- Referrals from mainstream medicine
- Public safety
- Complaints processes

Rationale

- Registration processes and boards need to be established by government.
- A significant amount of government funding is required to investigate options, write and enact legislation, establish and maintain registration boards.

- Where this process has occurred in the past, for acupuncture and chiropractic for example, it's been because the government has identified a risk to the public from these professions. No such risk has been identified with the practices of naturopaths, nutritionists, homeopaths or medical herbalists, and unless or until such a risk is identified, governments will not commit resources to registration for these occupations.
- Any registration process must apply a minimum education standard on those seeking registration. The minimum education standard will be a degree from a higher education institution.
- Registration will necessitate a higher level of bureaucratic intervention in a practice to ensure full compliance with registration obligations. Typically, registration will involve restrictions on marketing, Acupuncturists, for example, are prohibited from using testimonials for the purpose of marketing.
- Any registration process must describe the nature of the practice being registered. This means that the practice of naturopathy, nutrition, homeopathy and medical herbalism will be strictly defined. Anyone registered under a registration Act who practises outside the definition will be deemed to be in breach of the Act. For a naturopath for example, this may mean that after registration, he or she will no longer be able to prescribe herbal or homeopathic medicines for clients.
- Traditional natural medicine practices may be discouraged under a government registration scheme.

Those who promote registration for natural medicine practitioners often claim that registration will provide the registered occupations with a higher level of credibility, greater recognition by the public and government, will open the way to Medicare rebates for the providers of those services, and allow for the possibility of working within the framework of the public healthcare system. This seems unlikely as Naturopaths were registered by the Northern Territory Government in the 1980's and none of these alleged benefits were seen. Nor have these benefits been seen by the members of the acupuncture profession after registration was applied.

Registration will increase the annual costs that a practitioner will have to pay for the privilege of being able to provide those services to the public.

Final Point

ATMS will always engage with government on any policies that affect natural medicine occupations or the industry. In the event that the government decides to look at registration, then ATMS would participate in a constructive consultation process on behalf of members.

End

Date approved – 7 July 2017

