

ATMS supporting natural medicine practitioners and viable education pathways

Eight years ago, a decision was made to remove Advanced Diploma's in Naturopathy, Nutrition, Homeopathy and Herbal Medicine from the Vocational and Education Training (VET) sector. The Australian Traditional-Medicine Society (ATMS) opposed the decision at the time; however, it suited the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council to remove four complementary therapies from the VET sector.

ATMS did not want to see natural medicine courses removed from VET due to the risks that colleges would close when they had to move from teaching a range of qualifications in the sector to just remedial massage. ATMS also wanted to maintain an education pathway to a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, fears have been realised and the number of colleges and courses has drastically reduced: from some 22 education providers of ingestive qualifications to only two current providers of higher education qualifications, both currently owned by private equity companies. In 2023, there is only one education provider offering Herbal Medicine as a bachelor's degree and there is no one offering Homeopathy.

To manage the potential risk of this duopoly ATMS supported the development of industry Advanced Diploma's to provide appropriate pathways into the industry. These qualifications were based on the current ATMS Education Standard and reviewed extensively by the Academic Review Committee, informed by a comprehensive review by an independent adviser.

Recently ATMS were advised that a few industry suppliers of practitioner only products were proposing to remove access to the graduates of these newer Advanced Diploma's. ATMS met with a number of these suppliers to try and understand what risks they were trying to manage with the decision, as to date there are no examples of Advanced Diploma practitioners being inherently riskier than those holding higher education qualifications.

These companies have now advised that these restrictions will apply only to the recent graduates, those who hold an Advanced Diploma who graduated after 31 December 2022. ATMS supports the education of those practitioners and will continue to lobby for their access on an equitable basis to those products. We also note that most products have multiple suppliers, and many are widely available as retail.

ATMS will continue to support members currently in practice.

ATMS will also continue to support the future of natural medicine in Australia by actively encouraging viable natural medicine education, including appropriate pathways to higher education.

Charles Wurf,
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