

ATMS POSITION STATEMENT

Statutory Government Registration

ATMS has worked collaboratively with other professional associations over the past thirty years, in five different working groups, to determine the appropriate level of regulation for the natural medicine profession in Australia.

The current Australian regulatory environment is a combination of voluntary self-regulation by professional associations through their own Codes of Conduct, and regulation by State and Territory Governments through their Health Care Complaints Commissions (or equivalent), and their Codes of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners. It is ATMS's position that the current regulatory framework provides adequate protection for the public.

In the event that Governments proposes to discuss the statutory registration of modalities, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered. Note that ATMS continues to advocate on behalf of Chinese medicine practitioners who have been subject to Statutory Registration since 2012, though they have yet to be able to access all the benefits, such as access to Chronic Disease Management (CDM), or the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) plans and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Potential Advantages

The following are the potential advantages of having both the continued natural medicine professions' voluntary self-regulation with Government regulation:

Potential advantages of voluntary self-regulation:-

- Lower cost to consumers through:
 - No additional AHPA or Board registration fees
 - Lower Professional Indemnity insurance premiums
 - Lower business costs
- Competency standards set by/in consultation with the Natural Medicine Profession
- Allows practise of the principles of traditional medicine
- Fewer restrictions on marketing
- Promotion of natural medicine modalities
- Advocacy for the natural medicine profession
- Internal complaints process

Requirements for Statutory Registration

- Registration processes and Boards are established by Governments in consultation with the profession.
- 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 Chinese medicine and Chiropractic practitioners for example, it has been because Governments had identified a risk to the public from these professions. To date, no such risk has been identified by Governments with the practices of Naturopaths, Herbalists, Nutritionists or Homeopaths, and unless or until such a risk is identified, Governments will not commit resources for Registration of these professions.
- Any Registration process must apply a minimum education standard upon those seeking Registration. The minimum education standard is likely to be a Bachelor's degree from a Higher Education provider.
- Any Registration process prescribes the nature of the practice being Registered and is undertaken in consultation with the profession. This means that the scope of practice of the Registered Profession will be strictly defined. Any practitioner Registered under a Registration Act who practises outside of their scope of practice will be deemed to be in breach of the Act.

Potential advantages of Government Statutory Registration:-

- Increased perception of public safety
- Registration Board sets minimum education standards
- Protection of title
- External complaints processes
- Referrals from mainstream medicine
- Funding support for clinical services e.g. CDM, DVA and NDIS
- More public and professional recognition

End

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