

# Review of Health Practitioner Regulation in Victoria

March 2003

## Introduction

In October 2002, the Victorian Department of Human Services commenced a review of the system of regulation of Victoria's registered health professions. There are currently eleven Victorian registrant Acts that provide for the regulation of eleven health professions. These are Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Dispensers, Chiropractors, Dental care providers, Medical Practitioners, Nurses, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Psychologists, Optometrists and Osteopaths. There are also many health professions that are not subject to statutory registration and are self regulating.

This is the first in a series of newsletters to provide information on the review as it progresses.

This newsletter outlines the aims and purposes of the review, provides a time frame for its completion and contact details of the Department officers who are managing the review.

## Aims of review

The review has three main aims:

1. To ensure the framework for regulating Victoria's health professionals is up to date, responsive and equips health practitioner registration boards to protect the public and address emerging challenges
2. To promote consumer and community confidence in the operation of Victoria's regulatory scheme
3. To ensure good links between mechanisms that oversee practitioner quality and those that ensure health system quality.

## Areas to be investigated

To achieve its aims, the Department will undertake a comprehensive examination of the system of health practitioner regulation in Victoria. More specifically the focus will be on three areas; examining the current Victorian model of regulation, canvassing profession specific options for reform and updating all the relevant registration Acts to contain core provisions which will be common across all the health professions regulatory Acts.

## Victorian model of regulation

The review will assess the structure and function of the Victorian model of health practitioner registration. This

will include examining key features of the Victorian model and whether changes should be made in areas such as how the boards handle complaints and discipline, the membership of boards, the nature of the relationship between the boards and the Minister for Health and whether boards should have new powers to register specialists. The review will also consider alternative models for structuring the regulatory system, which may improve the speed with which any reforms are implemented across the registered health professions.

## Profession specific reforms

The review will also invite input on profession specific proposals for reform. The Department has already received some proposals for reform in areas such as:

- Regulation of cosmetic surgery practice
- Medical advertising
- Prescribing rights for podiatrists
- Nationally consistent medical registration arrangements
- Regulation of midwives
- Preventing deregistered practitioners continuing practice as counsellors, psychotherapists etc.

The list of issues to be considered has not been finalised and the Department welcomes any suggestions for profession specific proposals for reform.

### Common core provisions across professions

Lastly, the review will look at updating all the relevant health practitioner registration Acts to ensure that there are common core provisions across all professions.

Examples of such provisions may include providing boards with:

- Performance assessment/review powers
- Power to make professional indemnity insurance a condition of registration
- Power to enter additional postgraduate qualifications on the register
- Power to register students and address issues of ill-health

Other core provisions may include:

- Updating the definition of professional conduct
- Updating the search and entry/warrant provisions
- Changing the terminology in Acts from 'complaint' to 'notification'
- Establishing corporate offences for directing or inciting registered practitioners to engage in unprofessional conduct
- Requirement that boards be notified of outcomes of medical negligence cases

### Review of Health Practitioner Regulation – Timetable for reform

| Date         | Action   |
|--------------|--|
| Feb-Mar 2003 | Initial briefings with stakeholders  |
| Mar-Apr 2003 | Discussion paper prepared  |
| Jun 2003     | Discussion paper finalised and released for public comment                 |
| Jun-Jul 2003 | Stakeholder meetings conducted   |
| End Jul 2003 | Submissions close  |
| Aug-Sep 2003 | Submissions analysed, policy position prepared                             |
| Sep 2003     | Further consultation with stakeholders on reform proposals                 |
| Nov-Dec 2003 | Cabinet approval, drafting process. Further consultation with stakeholders |
| Feb-Mar 2004 | Cabinet approval for Bill/s to be introduced into Parliament               |

### Progress so far

The Department has conducted initial briefings with health practitioner boards, professional associations and consumer groups regarding the scope, aims and objectives of the review. These stakeholders have raised issues that may be addressed in the review. Officers responsible for managing the review are currently in the process of collating these issues towards framing the discussion paper that is due for release in June 2003.

Officers from the Department are available to consult with

interested groups regarding the review process.

### Contact details

The review is being conducted by Service and Workforce Policy Branch within the Policy and Strategic Projects Division of the Department.

The project officers responsible for managing the review are Ms Anne-Louise Carlton, Ms Bernadette Fallon and Ms Ann Fuller-Jackson. Further information is available from these officers.

Their contact details are:

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If you would like to be on the mailing list to receive newsletter updates and the discussion paper once it is released please contact Ms Bernadette Fallon.

This newsletter is also available online at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/pdpd/pubs.htm](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/pdpd/pubs.htm).

