

# Submission in response to the Independent Review of Overseas Health Practitioner Settings – Interim Report

## WA Department of Health

WA Health has worked with Ms Kruk and her team to support and provide input into the review process and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the prioritisation of reform options contained in the *Independent review of overseas health practitioner regulatory settings* Interim Report. WA also looks forward to continuing to work with Ms Kruk to finalise the report and implement useful and productive reforms that will enhance Australia's ability to attract and on-board overseas qualified health practitioners efficiently.

WA in principle supports the reforms as presented, acknowledging that some of these will require further review and consideration and that some reforms will result in cost pressures for the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). However, if Australia maintains its current processes we will not be seen as a country of choice when applicants are able to register and work in other developed countries without the current complexity and associated financial costs of our system. Longer-term investment and collaboration across multiple agencies and jurisdictions will also be imperative to ensure success.

As an immediate priority, WA supports those reforms that streamline the application and assessment processes, expand the recognition of comparable authorities, allow for greater flexibility, and recognises experience to ensure continuity in the delivery of services while addressing specific gaps in the health workforce.

### **a. Which reform options do you think should be prioritised?**

To support the review team, the Commonwealth and jurisdictions establish a timeline which will address meaningful reforms, WA confirms its support for the prioritisation of the following reform options:

- Reforms that improve the applicant experience:
  - I2, I5, I6, I7 and I8, with a suggestion that I13 could be incorporated into I2
- Reforms that expand 'fast track' pathways:
  - F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F9, F12 and F13, with a suggestion that a competent pathway for dental could be also introduced in F13
- Reforms that allow for greater flexibility while supporting safety:
  - S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, S11, S14 and S15, with a suggestion that S1 should also include revision of the English language test and the additional OSCE places identified in S3 continue beyond 2023.

WA recognises the importance of the workforce planning series of recommendations (W1-W5) and notes that longer term, these reforms will enable Australia to better develop our domestic workforce supply. While workforce

planning is important, currently there are no defined data requirements or an agreed process for jurisdictions to supply information to the Commonwealth. This will be a lengthy process requiring legislative change and as it will not result in immediate solutions to critical workforce needs, these reforms have not been prioritised.

**b. What, if any, reform options are missing from the Interim Report?**

In relation to potential opportunities that may be missing from the Interim Report, WA has the following suggestions:

- As identified in the report, a critical issue in relation to workforce planning is the ability to gather evidence on the allied health professions, especially the non-NRAS professions. A national certification scheme, previously proposed by the Commonwealth could have addressed this problem and would be a welcome reintroduction to the reforms.
- In relation to workforce planning, these functions are generally already established within jurisdictions, and could be resourced to increase output. Subject to the capacity of jurisdictions and agreed, legal processes, sharing information would need to be a reciprocal process to and from the Commonwealth and jurisdictions. This reciprocity is missing from the workforce planning set of reforms.
- WA would also like to acknowledge the significant cost and access issues health professionals living in WA experience in sitting OSCE and National Testing Centre examinations and welcome moves to address this to remain competitive. WA would welcome being factored into consideration for the development of a multi-disciplinary centre in WA.

The WA Department of Health welcomes the opportunity to discuss this submission further with Ms Kruk and her team and will continue to provide ongoing support and assistance where requested.