

Purpose of this submission

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is pleased to make this submission in relation to the Interim Report of the Independent Review of Overseas Health Practitioner Settings.

PSA's comments relate to the pharmacy profession in Australia.

About PSA

PSA is the only Australian Government-recognised peak national professional pharmacy organisation representing all of Australia's 36,000 pharmacists working in all sectors and across all locations.

PSA is committed to supporting pharmacists in helping Australians to access quality, safe, equitable, efficient and effective health care. PSA believes the expertise of pharmacists can be better utilised to address the healthcare needs of all Australians.

PSA works to identify, unlock and advance opportunities for pharmacists to realise their full potential, to be appropriately recognised and fairly remunerated.

PSA has a strong and engaged membership base that provides high-quality health care and are the custodians for safe and effective medicine use for the Australian community.

PSA leads and supports innovative and evidence-based healthcare service delivery by pharmacists. PSA provides high-quality practitioner development and practice support to pharmacists and is the custodian of the professional practice standards and guidelines to ensure quality and integrity in the practice of pharmacy.

Introduction

The health workforce crisis is deepening. PSA appreciates the work being undertaken through this independent review to identify short term actions that will facilitate the contribution of overseas health practitioners to our health system.

As the pharmacy profession's standards-setting body, PSA is the custodian of the *National competency standards framework for pharmacists in Australia*,¹ and also develops, maintains

¹ National competency standards framework for pharmacists in Australia. Canberra: PSA; 2016.

and promulgates its own suite of documents, including: *Code of ethics for pharmacists*,² *Professional practice standards*,³ *Clinical governance principles for pharmacy services*⁴ and various guidelines to support professional practice activities and pharmacist-delivered health services.

This well-established robust professional and ethical standards framework underpins the pharmacist workforce in Australia – from initial entry to the profession, and through their entire practising career. These various standards and guidelines are cited or applied by regulators to ensure Australians have access to safe and high quality pharmaceutical and healthcare services delivered by competent and committed pharmacists.

PSA also has an intern training program for pharmacists who are provisionally-registered with the Pharmacy Board of Australia and delivers high quality continuing professional development activities and courses to all pharmacists. In the context of overseas-trained pharmacists, PSA has suitable short courses such as *Introduction to pharmacy in Australia explained* which is designed for those who have completed their pharmacy qualification outside of Australia.

Specific comments relating to the pharmacy profession

Since the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2010, significant reform has continued to be implemented with regards to pharmacist practitioner registration, including overseas-trained pharmacists. As the pharmacy profession's standards-setting body, PSA works closely with the Pharmacy Board of Australia and the Australian Pharmacy Council to support their core remit in ensuring pharmacists in Australia are equipped to competently and safely deliver services to the public.

PSA notes that many of the gaps and key reforms identified in the Interim Report relate primarily to the medical, and nursing and midwifery professions. While it is acknowledged that uniform cross-professional arrangements may deliver benefits and efficiencies in some circumstances, PSA suggests this may not be the case where existing gaps do not apply broadly across all professions.

Several observations about the pharmacy profession's arrangements and experience are noted below.

PSA understands that, for the pharmacy profession:

- entries into Australia from similar countries (i.e. Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland and United States) based on the competent authority approach are already streamlined (or largely fast-tracked)
- overseas-trained pharmacists only need to deal with the Australian Pharmacy Council up to the point of applying for provisional registration

² Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. Code of ethics for pharmacists. Canberra: PSA; 2017.

³ Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. Professional practice standards. Version 5. Canberra: PSA; 2017.

⁴ Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. Clinical governance principles for pharmacy services. Canberra: PSA; 2018.

- a well-established, single portal process for candidates is already in place and operating well
- personalised support is provided to candidates – and this has been well received and highly rated by candidates
- a single onboarding process exists for candidates to register for their examination
- support is also provided to preceptors through the provision of workplace-based assessment tools.

PSA has also been informed that there has been an increase in demand for overseas pharmacist applicants in recent years.

Summary

PSA believes the regulatory process that overseas-trained pharmacists currently access and experience is appropriate, robust, transparent and streamlined, and will continue to be evaluated and improved, where necessary. Thus, PSA believes the pharmacy profession already meets appropriate standards and arrangements proposed in the majority of recommendations presented in the Interim Report.

PSA is committed to continue to work in partnership with regulators to support all pharmacists, and to grow the profession for the benefit of Australian patients and the public.

PSA strongly supports the need to urgently invest in improved workforce planning for the pharmacy profession and looks forward to a positive recommendation in this regard.

Submitted by:

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
PO Box 42
Deakin West ACT 2600
Tel: 02 6283 4777
www.psa.org.au

Contact:

Chris Campbell
General Manager Policy & Program Delivery

9 June 2023