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MEDIA STATEMENT

NHRC blueprint a welcome step to improved national health

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products, today welcomed key findings contained in the Interim Report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert, said she was encouraged by the focus on increased personal responsibility for health and wellbeing, and the role of individuals, communities, health professionals, employers and governments.

“The report recognises the fundamental challenge that health resources are finite and that much can be done to encourage and support people to maintain good health through appropriate choices and preventative health strategies.

“We also support an expansion of multidisciplinary teams through new community health clinics comprising a range of health professionals under the one roof.

“By making a range of healthcare professionals accessible at the frontline of health treatment, we are in a better position to manage issues as they arise as well as focus on longer term preventative health.

“The report places emphasis on a range of initiatives to help people to better look after their health before they face more costly and serious interventions.

“ASMI supports measures to address preventative health and the treatment of chronic conditions as well as moves to improve access to a broader group of health professionals such as pharmacists, practice nurses, complementary medicine practitioners, physiotherapists and dieticians.

“By broadening the range of professional advice available at the primary point of contact, we can better cater to a range of community needs as well as taking some of the workload off over-stretched GP services.

“There are many minor ailments and chronic conditions that can be self managed or treated by individuals in consultation with allied health professionals,” Ms Seifert said.

Recent research commissioned by ASMI found that 15% of all GP consultations involve the treatment of minor ailments – the equivalent of 25 million GP consultations annually, or approximately 96,000 consultations per day.^[1]

“It is clear that significant health resources are being devoted to coughs, colds and other conditions that could be effectively managed by a pharmacist, practice nurse or through responsible self care,” Ms Seifert said.

“The paper recognises the potential for individuals to have a greater role in decision making about their health, through greater self-care, monitoring and prevention.

“Steps to improve health literacy in the community and to address patient needs through expanded and effective electronic information are also welcome”.

Ms Seifert said the NHHRC Interim Report represents a bold step toward bringing overdue reforms to national health.

“These are big issues which need addressing because we have reached the point where the current framework is not sustainable and health outcomes are being compromised.

“The Commission should be commended for taking this step toward such a fundamental and necessary reform”.

[1] *Minor ailment workload in general practice*, IMS Australia and New Zealand, November 2008

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI’s mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. www.asmi.com.au

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