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31 August 2011

MEDIA STATEMENT

ASMI welcomes recommendations for better regulation of complementary medicines

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products, today welcomed calls for measures to strengthen the regulatory framework for complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs).

The Executive Director of ASMI, Dr Deon Schoombie said the report of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) into CAMs was in accordance with the position that ASMI has been advocating for a number of years.

“ASMI has been calling for the implementation of the remaining recommendations of the Expert Committee on Complementary Medicines in the Health System (ECCMHS) for quite some time.”

ASMI was part of the original ECCMHS, established by the TGA in 2005, comprising industry, consumers, health care professional and academics, which made the initial recommendations on industry reform to the parliamentary secretary.

“These measures will help to strengthen the framework of regulation in the sector by providing more accurate and timely advice to the public, and will help to protect the credibility of those products that are proven and evidence-based.

“This is a very timely and well-considered report which has provided the opportunity to help the industry overcome the damage that is incurred through products without credible evidence to support their claims,” Dr Schoombie said.

“While the full report needs to be reviewed in detail, ASMI agrees with the five key recommendations put forward by the ANAO and believes they will help to instil confidence among consumers, and provide greater transparency about products, their quality, and efficacy,” he said.

ASMI supports a key recommendation for further strengthening of the framework to ensure greater compliance through increased post-market surveillance. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) currently undertakes both random and targeted surveillance, and this should be extended to ensure early detection of non-compliance.

Penalties and sanctions should be in place to act as an effective deterrent against non-compliance.

Dr Schoombie said the ANAO has undertaken a rational and balanced analysis of industry regulation in the sector. Regulation of medicines in Australia is based on a risk-based management model in which the aim is to ensure that the level of regulation is commensurate with the risk posed by the medicines.

The ANAO recommendations, which have been accepted by the Department of Health and Ageing, are designed to build on the existing framework. They are consistent with this risk-based model and with the agreed COAG principle of minimum effective regulation to ensure public health and safety.

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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