

MEDIA RELEASE

ASMI RESPONDS TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REPORT INTO HEALTH SYSTEM

19 January 2006 - Australia's health system will benefit from measures to provide patients with more flexible services, greater access to commonly used medicines and greater focus on personal health, the Executive Director of the Australian Self-Medication Industry, Juliet Seifert said today.

Ms Seifert was responding to the release of the Productivity Commission Report, *Australia's Health Workforce*.

The Commission's recommendations include measures to enable patients to obtain access to a wider range of health practitioners such as nurse practitioners, physiotherapists and speech pathologists.

"It is also important to recognise that many people with minor ailments or chronic conditions are probably able to better manage their health through greater access to over-the-counter products and complementary medicines.

"Those who can manage their health safely and effectively without doctor visits are reducing demands on the health system and the health budget," Ms Seifert said.

As the Productivity Commission notes, "one important focus should be on reducing the underlying demand for health care through 'wellness' and preventative strategies".

Ms Seifert said ASMI supports efforts to promote self-care through both preventative health strategies and self-medication where it is appropriate and safe to do so.

"Many patients who visit a GP for routine procedures or to simply pick up a repeat prescription could probably be adequately serviced by a pharmacist or a nurse practitioner. It is also important that certain prescription-only medicines that have long been proven to be safe and effective are switched to over-the-counter status".

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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