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1 September 2009

MEDIA STATEMENT

Health system now has the blueprint for reform

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products, today welcomed key elements from the latest reviews into Australia's health system, in particular the encouragement for greater personal responsibility in managing health and wellbeing.

The Executive Director of ASMI, Juliet Seifert, said the Primary Health Care Strategy and the National Preventative Health Strategy present the most compelling case to date for overhaul of national health.

"Each of these reports underlines the key role for pharmacists, GPs and allied health professionals in supporting people to make healthy life choices.

"There is a welcome emphasis on equipping the community with the tools and the knowledge that will enable them to make informed choices," Ms Seifert said.

The Primary Health Care Strategy specifically identifies the need for stronger links between consumers and health professionals: *"Consumers expect to be involved and active in their health care management, and should have access to tools to enable self-care in a structured and informed way, and assist them to navigate the health system maze effectively"*.

The report identifies the need for strengthened, integrated and more systematic approaches to preventive care with regular risk assessments supported by data and best use of workforce, so that people "know how to manage their own health and self-care".

The National Preventative Health Strategy emphasises the importance of partnerships between community, government, business and healthcare professionals, and the relevance of strategies to cater for people at various life stages.

"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.

"These reports to Government recognise 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.

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

“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,” Ms Seifert said.

The report of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission released earlier this year coupled with the two latest health reviews provide a clear blueprint and direction for reform.

“In particular the commitment to a new national health promotion and prevention agency opens the way for a comprehensive program of self care, as has been successfully implemented in the UK, enabling individuals to take greater personal responsibility for health and wellbeing”.

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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