

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by:	Western Queensland Primary Health Network
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25 September 2024

Office of the Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee
QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE
Parliament House
Cnr George and Alice Streets Brisbane Qld 4000

heac@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Secretariat,

RE: Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee's inquiry into the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024: Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) submission

Thank you for inviting the WQPHN to provide a submission to this important inquiry.

We note the Bill follows agreement by Australian Health Ministers at their meeting in July 2024 to amend the National Law to improve public protection and public confidence in the safety of services provided by registered health practitioners. We further understand the objectives of the amendments are to:

- *protect public safety by establishing a nationally consistent process for practitioners to regain registration after their registration has been cancelled, or they have been disqualified from registration, by a tribunal – cancelled and disqualified practitioners will be required to obtain a reinstatement order from a responsible tribunal before applying to a National Board for re-registration*
- *increase transparency for the public about disciplinary action against health practitioners who have been found by a tribunal to have engaged in serious sexual misconduct – National Boards will be required to permanently publish additional information on the national public registers*
- *strengthen protections for notifiers (complainants) against reprisals or other detriment, threats and intimidation, and clarify consumer protections in relation to nondisclosure agreements about the health, conduct or performance of health practitioners.*

We have considered the Bill and related documentation and believe the proposed amendments are in keeping with the objectives of the National Law and Ministers' intent. Importantly, the amendments are also in keeping with contemporary community expectations around enabling and protecting the public in the use of health services they access, while balancing those rights with fair legislative provisions and procedures that support practitioners.

On that basis WQPHN supports the proposed amendments.

WQPHN would also like to make a comment with respect to the efficacy of the proposed amendments in practice. Without inferring misconduct of the kind described in the Bill is more likely to occur in rural and remote settings, there is a potential risk that where health practitioners and service access are in chronic and severe short supply (such as remote Western Queensland) it is possible some people may have greater reservations about reporting or following

through on misconduct where the result could be to reduce service access in communities with few if any alternative providers.

This concern does not diminish the Bill, but highlights risks associated with service environments that are severely stretched. WQPHN would welcome these underlying issues of health workforce distribution and service access being a greater priority in Health Ministers deliberations going forward.

Yours sincerely



Sandy Gillies
Chief Executive Officer
Western Queensland PHN