

Media Release

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CMA Queries Healthcare Complaints Inquiry

Mr Carl Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA), presenting to the NSW Committee of the Healthcare Complaints Commission (HCCC) today, queried the rationality of the Inquiry into *'The promotion of false or misleading health-related information or practices'*.

The Inquiry has been self-referred by the HCCC to consider measures to address the promotion of unscientific health-related information or practices, and is focused on those who are not recognised health practitioners.

"In 2012-13, the Healthcare Complaints Commission received 10 complaints about unregistered health practitioners providing incorrect or misleading information, out of a total of 4,554 complaints about health service providers in NSW. Only 114 complaints, or 3 per cent, related to unregistered health practitioners for the period," said Mr Gibson.

"With two in every three people using complementary medicines – I think it's fair to ask, with only 10 complaints recorded about provision of incorrect or misleading information, if this Inquiry is a good use of taxpayers money."

"It should also be highlighted, and indeed a number of the submissions to the Inquiry have done so, that there is already sufficient legislation in NSW to address dissemination of misleading or deceptive information. Under Australian Consumer Law it is unlawful for a business to make a statement in trade or commerce that is misleading or deceptive or would be likely to mislead or deceive."

"In addition, Schedule 3 of the *Public Health Regulation 2012* made under the *Public Health Act 2010* contains a code of conduct that directly addresses false and misleading information, and importantly, applies to all health practitioners, whether or not the person is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law."

"CMA supports the current initiative for an independent National Registration and Accreditation scheme for naturopaths, Western herbalists and nutritionists. An independent register will provide increased confidence to the Australian public that the vast majority of complementary healthcare practitioners practise in a safe, competent and ethical manner."

"Any further Inquiry for increased regulatory scope, prior to the implementation of a national code of conduct and the on-going work towards the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme appears somewhat excessive," said Mr Gibson.

ENDS

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