



Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

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Chinese Medicine Council of NSW

Response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into health Care Funding

October 31, 2023

A. The funding of health services provided in NSW & how the funding can most effectively support the safe delivery of high quality, timely, equitable and accessible patient-centred care and health services to the people of NSW, now and into the future.

The Chinese Medicine Council of NSW strongly supports the focus of the review of the health system in increasing the relevance, diversity and the cost effectiveness of health services offered to the NSW community, particularly in relation to the design and procurement of the range of services to ensure a greater patient-centred focus.

The Chinese Medicine Council notes that while innovations have been made in service delivery and planning in NSW, the scope of the options still appear to be constrained by past approaches to expenditure and service delivery, resulting in a lack of innovation, and reduced flexibility for patients.

Of particular concern, is the lack of alignment between NSW Allied Health service planning and delivery, and Ahpra regulated Health Services, of which Chinese Medicine has been a participant since July 2012 (as a regulated health sector). It is noted that this lack of alignment is inconsistent with NSW's participation in the National Scheme, and its contributions through the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission and the Health Professionals Councils Authority.

The alignment of coverage would provide an easy first step in the reform process, and open up a wide array of service options to patients.

B ii. The engagement and involvement of local communities in health service development and delivery

Community consultation/feedback processes should be designed to ensure input is sought on a broader range of health services than may be framed by the current set of NSW funded service arrangements.

They should allow for the community to make suggestions on the types of clinical treatments they have experienced and have found to have been helpful in their recovery and/or management of conditions, and/or would like to access as part of their overall treatment.

An important aspect of ensuring broader community input is adjustment of staff training to shift the focus of current planning and procurement staff away from historic services, and to facilitate a more flexible and innovative approach being taken.

Service evaluation should form an important aspect of the community input into expanded planning and service delivery arrangements.

B. ix. Opportunities for an expanded scope of practice for paramedics, community and allied health workers, nurses and/or midwives

As noted above, the scope of NSW Health planning and procurement processes needs to be expanded to incorporate, at the minimum, Ahpra regulated health services in the Allied Health sector, in recognition of the quality controls exercised by the National Scheme, along with cross-sector collaboration fostered by it.

The type of areas where Chinese Medicine could make a contribution are broad, within both the hospital system and community settings, as shown by McDonald and Janz in their literature review of acupuncture studies in 2017*, which showed acupuncture was effective in 117 out of the 122 conditions studied over the preceding 11 years.

This included strong evidence of effectiveness for conditions such as chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting, post operative nausea and vomiting, post operative pain, chronic low back pain, knee osteoarthritis, allergic rhinitis, headaches, and migraine prophylaxis, on the basis of NH&MRC Council Level 1 effectiveness standards.

It also showed there was moderate evidence of effectiveness for a further 38 conditions including pain (cancer pain, back pain, neck pain, back or pelvic pain during pregnancy), acute stroke, obesity, anxiety, insomnia (perimenopausal, postmenopausal & post-stroke), asthma in adults and plantar heel pain and so on.

- (McDonald J, Janz S. 2017, *The Acupuncture Evidence Project: A Comparative Literature Review*, (Revised edition), Brisbane: Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association Ltd)

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31 October 2023