

NEW HEALTH PRACTITIONER LEGISLATION FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Statement by Minister for Health

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Health) [2.05 pm]: I take this opportunity to update the House on the progress the Government is making on the health practitioner legislation. In June 2001 the Department of Health published “Key Directions, Review of Western Australian Health Practitioner Legislation”, which stated the Government’s commitment to enacting new health practitioner legislation. Western Australia’s obligations under the Competition Principles Agreement 1995 required further review of practice protection for regulated health practitioner groups and an examination of restriction of clinical practices to particular health professions.

In March this year, the discussion paper “National Competition Policy Review of Practice Protection for Regulated Western Australian Health Practitioners” was released. The paper contained information regarding consultation arrangements, national competition policy, current legislation and how the review of practice protection relates to recommendations for new health practitioner legislation for our State.

The Government has approved the drafting of replacement legislation for chiropractors, dentists, dental prosthetists, nurses, occupational therapists, optometrists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists and psychologists. A consultation process is in progress to seek the views of the various health professional groups to ensure that their needs are reflected in the provisions of the new legislation.

A template Bill, modelled on the current Osteopaths Act, will be available for consultation in a matter of weeks. This will provide a further opportunity for comment on profession-specific issues. However, due to the extensive consultation already undertaken, it is anticipated that the Bill will require only minor amendments to suit each health practitioner profession. In addition to this process, I will also be seeking approval for the preparation of a new Medical Act to implement the outcomes of the extensive consultation undertaken through the Medical Act review.

I also draw the House’s attention to pharmacy legislation, which is a matter dear to the member for Ballajura’s heart. The Council of Australian Governments commissioned a national review of restrictions on competition in state, territory and commonwealth pharmacy legislation in 1999. The COAG report “National Competition Policy Review of Pharmacy Legislation”, chaired by Warwick Wilkinson, AM, was released in February 2000.

COAG referred the Wilkinson report to a senior official working group, consisting of representatives from the Commonwealth Government, States and Territories, for detailed advice regarding the recommendations. The Prime Minister released the working group’s response to the Wilkinson report in August 2002. The Government has begun consultation with pharmacy groups about the outcomes of the pharmacy review and will consider options for the reform of the industry shortly.

In closing, many health practitioner groups and individuals have raised issues regarding health practitioner legislation with my staff and me. The contribution made by the many health practitioners in reviewing the legislation to date is valued. I put on record my thanks to health professionals in this State for their input into the review process.