

## **AMA Submission: improving the adequacy of the penalty regime for non-registered individuals**

The AMA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendments.

The AMA has consistently advocated for a scheme that supports registration arrangements that enable medical practitioners, who are qualified and safe, to work anywhere in Australia and independent accreditation of medical education and training that meets international guidelines.

Pretending to be a registered health practitioner (holding out) is an offence under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

Misusing any registered title, particularly the title medical practitioner, is unacceptable. The general public, patients and the profession expect that the registration processes under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme provide protection of the public by ensuring that only registered practitioners practise their profession. Registered practitioners have the skills and qualifications to provide safe care to the Australian community.

Individuals holding out to be a practitioner without registration risk bringing the scheme and the profession into disrepute.

As such, the AMA supports the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency taking the appropriate action to investigate and prosecute those individuals who are not appropriately registered and are practicing on unsuspecting patients.

Given the serious risks that unregistered practitioners could pose to the health of the community, and the recent cases of individuals performing medical treatment whilst not being registered, the AMA supports the reforms to strengthen the penalty regime in order to deter other would-be charlatans.

The AMA supports the proposed amendments that will:

- Increase monetary penalties for holding out offences, restricted title offences, restricted practice offences, and contravention of a prohibition order.
- Introduce a multi-year imprisonment term for the above offences.
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- Introduce a nationally consistent time period for prosecuting offences under the national law.
- Allow for interim prohibition order powers in relation to unregistered practitioners whose conduct poses a serious risk to public health and safety.

In summary, the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme should ensure safety, quality, and the highest standards in medical training, and ultimately the services themselves. The AMA supports the proposed reforms.

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