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PHARMAC

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John Marwick
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Health and Disability Systems Strategy Directorate
Ministry of Health

By email: john_marwick@moh.govt.nz

Dear John

Response to survey document on the operation of the Health Practitioner Competence Assurance Act 2003

Thank you for providing PHARMAC with the opportunity to respond to the Ministry of Health's survey on the operation of the HPCA Act 2003 (the Act). We support the principles of the Act, which have particular relevance for PHARMAC's operations.

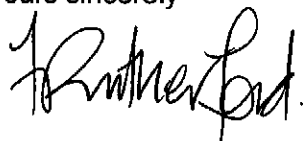
We have a strong interest in ensuring the safe and optimal prescription of funded medicines. We encourage measures, including the provisions of the Act, which aim to ensure prescribers are competent to perform this function.

PHARMAC is in the process of removing restrictions, by prescriber specialty. These restrictions were applied, in part, to ensure safety. In removing the protection offered by these restrictions we are relying heavily on the relevant professional bodies to ensure competence in their members' prescribing activity.

We have encountered one specific issue that relates to Section 7 of the Act and provide the following comments in response to question 4 in the survey. The Medical Council has advised PHARMAC that staff members who hold New Zealand medical qualifications, but who are not registered with the Medical Council, cannot include their qualifications on business cards and correspondence. In this respect the Act restricts the use of qualifications held by staff working in roles that could be carried out by people who have no medical training.

We recognise that this is not a simple matter to resolve. However we suggest that the Ministry consider identifying a specific qualification which only registered medical practitioners could add to their names.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Rutherford
Senior Policy Analyst

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Investing in Health