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**The Hon Greg Hunt MP  
Minister for Health**

**BY: ..... Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the  
Public Service and Cabinet**

D20-36390

Ref No: MS20-001133

Professor Villis Marshall AC  
Board Chair  
Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care  
GPO Box 5480  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

9 NOV 2020

Dear Professor

I am writing to outline my expectations of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (Commission). This is part of the Australian Government's commitment to effective governance and performance of the Commission, guided by the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

I would like to acknowledge your recent re-appointment as Chair of the Board, and express my appreciation of the valuable work being undertaken by the Commission, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission has been instrumental in leading and coordinating safety and quality improvements nationally, supporting better health outcomes and long-term health system sustainability.

Alongside the Commission's Strategic Intent, Work Plan and Corporate Plan, the Statement of Expectations, enclosed, helps to shape the priorities of the Commission.

I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with the Commission to ensure that the current high quality standards continue into the future.

Yours sincerely

Greg Hunt

Encl (1)

cc: Adjunct Professor Debora Picone AM, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

## Statement of Expectations – Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

### Introduction

The Board of the Commission is responsible for governing the Commission and meeting its functions under legislation. As a portfolio agency that receives funding on a cost shared basis from the Australian Government and all state and territory governments, the requirement for collaborative partnerships is paramount to achieving the Commission's work and priorities.

### The Commission's Work

As set out in the *National Health Reform Act 2011 (NHRA 2011)*, the Commission's role is to:

- lead and coordinate improvements in safety and quality in health care in Australia by identifying issues and policy directions, and recommending priorities for action;
- disseminate knowledge and advocate for safety and quality;
- report publicly on the state of safety and quality including performance against national standards;
- recommend national data sets for safety and quality, working within current multilateral governmental arrangements for data development, standards, collection and reporting;
- provide strategic advice to Health Ministers on best practice thinking to drive quality improvement, including implementation strategies, and
- recommend nationally agreed standards for safety and quality improvement.

In addition to this, the 2020-25 Addendum to the NHRA seeks that the Commission will:

- expand its role of developing national clinical standards and strengthened clinical governance in consultation with jurisdictions and Health Ministers.
- formulate and monitor safety and quality standards and work with clinicians to identify best practice clinical care, to ensure the appropriateness of services being delivered in a particular health care setting, and
- provide advice to relevant governing committees about which of the standards are suitable for implementation as national clinical standards.

The Addendum seeks that the Commission also focuses on the following targeted projects and policy areas:

- Curating the Sentinel Events and Hospital Acquired Complications (HAC) lists to ensure they remain robust and relevant for clinical improvement purposes, within its existing governance arrangements and in conjunction with the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority (IHPA) Technical Advisory Committee advice;
- Maintaining a HAC Curation Clinical Advisory Group (HCCAG) to advise on new and existing complications on the HAC list;
- Assessing the rates of preventability for each HAC to inform a risk adjustment methodology developed by IHPA;
- Maintaining a nationally consistent definition for avoidable hospital readmissions;
- Providing options for the further development of safety and quality-related reforms, including examining ways that avoidable and preventable hospitalisations can be reduced through changes to the Addendum, in collaboration with the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority and the Administrator of the National Health Funding Pool; and
- Advising on clinician engagement.

### Short and long-term priorities of the Commission

As set out in legislation, the Commission is to deliver upon its three year rolling Work Plan agreed by myself and state and territory Health Ministers. This Work Plan will support the Commission to deliver in the agreed national priority areas of safe delivery of care; partnering with consumers; partnering with healthcare professionals; and quality, value and outcomes.

I expect that the Commission will undertake tasks in the Work Plan to enable better health outcomes and experiences for all patients and consumers and improve value and sustainability in the health system through effective leadership and coordination of national improvements in the safety and quality of health care.

The Commission is expected to continue work in the development, coordination and support for implementation of national standards that foster the delivery of safe and high-quality health care. In particular, the Commission will support health service organisations by:

- coordinating the implementation of the second edition of the NSQHS Standards, and
- improving the reliability of the accreditation process through the implementation of key strategies including public reporting.

As part of the ongoing development of the rolling three year work plan, I would ask that the Commission ensure the plan is updated to capture emerging priorities. For example, development of the 2020-21 work plan should include work to support the quality use of medicines and medicines safety, which was named as the 10<sup>th</sup> National Health Priority Area (NHPA) in November 2019. As part of this, the Commission will deliver a national baseline report which will inform the development of the NHPA for quality use of medicines and medicines safety, through targeted, collaborative actions that reduce medication related harm.

I expect the Commission will continue to support Australia's response to COVID-19. I am grateful for the support that the Commission has provided to jurisdictions during this pandemic. The Commission should continue to support the dissemination of information nationally to clinicians and the public on priority areas such as infection control. Where appropriate in the context of COVID-19, I encourage the Commission to continue to seek opportunities to promote safe and high quality care through its resource development.

I also acknowledge the Commission has established an Australian COVID-19 Rapid Response Clinical Guidance Unit following discussion with the Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Nick Coatsworth in April 2020. The establishment of this unit has provided strategic oversight and coordination of clinical care guidance being developed for the health system. I look forward to the unit continuing to work with relevant committees and groups to facilitate development of the guidance, and facilitate dissemination and uptake of the guidance by health services, clinicians and patients, in collaboration with states and territories.

Through funding provided by the Australian Government, the Commission, working closely with The George Institute for Global Health Australia, will lead an important project to improve early recognition, treatment and outcomes for patients with sepsis in Australia. I thank the Commission for its initial actions in this area, including development of a report on *Epidemiology of Sepsis in Australian Public Hospital*. This important work will facilitate positive patient outcomes through the increased awareness and recognition of sepsis. I

would request that the Commission continue to lead this work, including through the development of clinical guidance and a targeted communication and awareness campaign.

Subject to finalised contracts, the Australian Government will fund the Commission to act as Australia's National Project Manager for phase 2 of the Patient Reported Indicators Survey (PaRIS) initiative. The PaRIS initiative is a project of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, launched in 2018. I recognise that the Commission will build Australia's capacity to measure and compare care outcomes and experiences as reported by patients. This will be achieved through the development and trialing of a survey that will develop indicators to enable comparisons across countries, with the purpose of evolving in a common direction internationally, to enable shared learning, development and research. This research will enable the Commission to continue to drive improvements in patient safety and quality in health care in Australia within a global context.

I ask the Commission to continue its dialogue with my department on the transfer of pathology and diagnostic imaging accreditation administrative functions. The key aims and benefit of the proposed transfer is to move towards functional alignment in recognition of the Commission's broad experience and expertise in supporting safety and quality in health care settings. This would also strengthen the interface between pathology and diagnostic imaging specialists and other clinicians to the benefit of patients. Working with my department, the Commission's ongoing engagement with jurisdictions and the sector is important towards supporting the transfer of responsibilities and into the future.

#### Legislative framework

I ask that the Commission fully complies, and operates in accordance with, all relevant legislation including the *National Health Reform Act 2011*, the *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act) and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

#### Stakeholder relationships

The relationship between the Commission and my department is highly collaborative and valued. I am aware the Commission meets regularly with my department to ensure the timely sharing of advice, and I look forward to this productive relationship continuing. As the Secretary of the department plays an important role in providing me with policy advice in my oversight of portfolio agencies, this engagement is pivotal in supporting strong safety and quality outcomes. I look forward to you continuing to provide appropriate notice of key issues, reports and events that may impact on government operations or policies.

Effective relationships with state and territory partners are essential and I ask that the Commission continue its strong engagement through the Inter-Jurisdictional Committee as a mechanism of encouraging collaboration between all jurisdictions, the Commonwealth and the Commission.

#### Organisational Governance and Financial Management

As you are aware, it is important that the Commission continue to comply with the principles of the Commonwealth Resource Management Framework as specified in the PGPA Act, and to give effect to the governance, performance and accountability requirements covered by the PGPA Act, applicable to a corporate entity.

Conclusion:

I would appreciate your response to the Statement of Expectations in the form of a Statement of Intent by 18 December 2020, outlining how the Commission proposes to meet the expectations outlined herein. In the interests of transparency and accountability, we ask that the Commission publish and make publically available the information in this letter along with your response.