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**NEW NATIONAL REGISTRATION LAWS OFF TO A POOR START**

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said the proposed new National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) would not fulfil its intended purpose, as the AMA has long warned, after flawed template legislation passed the Queensland Parliament last night.

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill 2009* is intended to be the model legislation to be considered by all State and Territory Parliaments with local modifications.

Dr Pesce said the Queensland Bill, which provides for the creation of the new National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the health professions, failed to take into account AMA concerns about the public interest and places too much power with Health Ministers.

“Despite the best advice, the Queensland Parliament last night gave Health Ministers the power to issue policy directions to the proposed National Medical Board in relation to new or amended accreditation standards for medical education and training, without undertaking the public interest,” Dr Pesce said.

“While Health Ministers would have to consider the potential impact on quality and safety of health care, the AMA believes this is not robust enough to protect the public interest in terms of accreditation standards for medical education and training

“Consideration of the public interest is essential to ensure that quality and safety is not compromised when looking to short-term solutions to workforce supply constraints.

“A public interest test must be enshrined in the Bill.”

The Queensland Parliament also ignored advice from the medical profession and the medical indemnity insurers to amend the Bill to provide additional exemptions from mandatory reporting for spouses, treating doctors and other professionals - such as doctors working in doctors’ advisory health services - who provide support to doctors with health issues.

Without changes, there will now be a system where doctors may not seek necessary medical care because their treating doctors will be obliged to report them.

Dr Pesce said the Bill offers no protection around the use of titles.

“As the legislation stands, non-medical health practitioners will be able to use the title ‘physician’ or ‘surgeon’,” Dr Pesce said.

“This is dangerous and misleading as members of the public could wrongly believe they are seeing a medical practitioner.

“The community must have confidence that this new national scheme will ensure safety, quality, and the highest standards in medical training and, ultimately, the medical services themselves.

“The Bill passed by the Queensland Parliament last night will not provide the community with that confidence.

“All State and Territory Parliaments are now expected to give up their sovereignty and accept this Bill, including any future amendments.

“The AMA believes the Queensland Parliament is handing the others a flawed and ineffectual Bill.

“We urge the other State and Territory Parliaments to amend the Bills when it comes before them to ensure they retain sovereignty and correct the ill-considered decisions of the Queensland Parliament.

“The States and Territories must work closely with their respective AMA to get this important new Scheme right,” Dr Pesce said.

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