

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services



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NEW COMPLAINTS WATCHDOG ON THE JOB TO PROTECT PATIENTS

A new watchdog with greater powers to protect patients and crack down on dodgy unregistered health service providers and practitioners has started work.

Minister for Health Jill Hennessy announced the appointment of Karen Cusack as the inaugural Health Complaints Commissioner, with the *Health Complaints Act 2016* coming into effect today.

The office of the Health Complaints Commissioner replaces the former office of the Health Services Commissioner, creating a new complaints system with tougher powers to warn and protect the public from harm.

The new health complaints body has beefed up powers to name and shame dangerous and unethical health providers.

For the first time, anyone will be able to make a complaint to the new Commissioner, rather than just the person who has received the health service. The Commissioner will also be able to initiate an investigation even when no complaint is lodged.

When a new statutory code of conduct is breached, the Commissioner has expanded powers to issue an order prohibiting the health provider from practicing. Individuals who breach an order face up to two years jail.

Dodgy health practitioners banned in other states will now also be automatically banned in Victoria. This will stop them from moving to Victoria to offer their disreputable services to vulnerable Victorians.

For the past seven years, Ms Cusack has been the Corporate Counsel at the Royal Women's Hospital and a member of the hospital's executive team. She brings considerable legal expertise, having been a lawyer for more than 20 years, and extensive knowledge of the health sector to the role.

The new body will also work closely with the Andrews Labor Government's Safer Care Victoria and the new Health Information Agency to improve quality and safety and drive down avoidable harm at Victorian hospitals.

Ms Hennessy thanked the outgoing Health Services Commissioner Grant Davies for his contribution and for working tirelessly to prepare for the implementation of the new Act.

Dr Davies will take on a new role within Safer Care Victoria where he will help lead the implementation of the Government's quality and safety reforms and continue his work to create a better, safer health system.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

"We're putting the safety of all patients first. Our new health complaints watchdog will put dodgy unregistered health providers out of business for good."

"The watchdog will play a pivotal role in protecting the public from unethical health providers who try to take advantage of the vulnerable and sick by making false and outrageous claims."

"Karen Cusack has a proven track record as a highly respected senior lawyer in the health sector and will continue the important work undertaken by Grant Davies during his time as Health Services Commissioner."