

30 March 2016

Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement Submission  
Free Trade Agreement Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
R G Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
Barton ACT 0221

By email; [indiafta@dfat.gov.au](mailto:indiafta@dfat.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to the Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement

The Australian Pharmacy Council Ltd (APC) is the independent accrediting authority for pharmacy education and training. We play a key role in protecting the public safety by ensuring high standards of pharmacy education.

We are a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, registered with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission. We accredit education programs and assess the competence of pharmacists. This is to ensure pharmacists have the skills and knowledge to deliver effective health care that meets the changing needs of the community. We also assess the qualifications and skills of overseas-qualified pharmacists for registration and migration purposes.

We have an interest in the proposed Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, both as an assessment body for skills of overseas pharmacists, and also as a facilitator of high standards of pharmacist education worldwide.

Historical Indian Pharmacy education and registration standards

Until reasonably recently, pharmacists in India have completed 3 or 4 year degree programs that prepare them predominantly for working in the pharmaceutical industry. Their training and skills are not as 'clinically' based as our Australian pharmacy education and practice. Any Indian registered pharmacists applying to us for assessment of their skills for migration purposes in Australia, are required to successfully pass a screening knowledge exam (Knowledge Assessment of Pharmaceutical Sciences KAPS), complete a period of a year's practical training in a pharmacy in Australia, and then complete all the registration examinations prior to being able to register as a pharmacist in Australia.

From our perspective, any negotiated Free Trade Agreement with India would need to allow us to continue to assess the competence of these graduates prior to their registration as pharmacists in Australia.

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## Changes occurring in Indian Pharmacy education

In recent years, there has been a change in pharmacy education in India, as described below:

- India now accounts for 25% of the global disease burden, with one in four Indians risking death from chronic non-communicable diseases before the age of 70.
- The Indian government has initiated actions in line with the WHO global action plan for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCD's) 2013-2020, and is the first country to develop national targets to reduce global premature deaths by 2025.
- India has therefore seen the need for increased use of appropriately trained pharmacists to meet these targets by contributing to effective pharmaceutical care in chronic disease management.
- To meet this need, Indian pharmacy education is undergoing transformation to improve health outcomes with had the addition of clinical pharmacy education programs, which are more similar to Australian pharmacy degrees than their tradition degrees.
- To assist in raising the standards of Indian pharmacy graduates, we at the Australian Pharmacy Council can assist with the development of national competency examinations and accreditation of pharmacy programs using our Australian standards and expertise.

Because of these changes, we have commenced discussions with the Pharmacy Council of India to discuss how we can assist them to build the pharmacist workforce of suitable quality to achieve their government's aims. This includes discussing how our APC examinations and accreditation processes can assist them to reach suitable standards. There are over 1 million pharmacists in India, and over 100 new PharmD programs with 30 students in each completing the new clinical training.

We therefore welcome the continued negotiations of the Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, and would welcome an opportunity to discuss this further and provide more feedback to the Department.

Should you require any further information on this submission, please contact me on

[Bronwyn.clark@pharmacycouncil.org.au](mailto:Bronwyn.clark@pharmacycouncil.org.au)

Yours sincerely



Bronwyn Clark  
Chief Executive Officer

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