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MEDIA RELEASE

Nicola Roxon to engage in self care health debate

Federal Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, will deliver the keynote speech at the Australian Self-Medication Industry's National Conference, *'Self Care: How Much Is Your Responsibility?'* in November.

Ms Roxon will be joined by Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Mark Butler, and the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, and Minister Assisting the Finance Minister on Deregulation, Dr Craig Emerson.

The ASMI National Conference will bring together a range of health experts to discuss how enhanced consumer empowerment can benefit Australia's health system, and the steps needed to safely and effectively implement self care into the system.

ASMI Executive Director, Juliet Seifert said the National Conference, including Ms Roxon's address, comes at a critical time in the challenge to reform Australia's health system.

"Australia is currently witnessing a number of important health inquiries and policy discussions. It is important that at such a critical juncture, the government, industry, consumers and academia work together to deliver the best outcomes for all.

"Self care is an important part of the drive to create a better health system. It involves greater personal responsibility on the part of consumers, leading to improved health outcomes and an easing of pressure on health budgets.

"We look forward to engaging with Ms Roxon and Mr Butler on the challenges of the health system and the implementation of the government's planned reform agenda, and with Dr Emerson on the drive to create better access to medicines through more effective regulation."

Providing a case study for the reduction in red tape in health systems will be senior UK government official, Chris Horsey who will outline the significant changes in the UK health system and the scope for similar steps in Australia.

Mr Horsey is the Head of Better Regulation in the UK Department of Health, the unit responsible for sweeping changes in the country's health system that have seen increased emphasis on consumer self care, a fresh focus on the role of pharmacy, and reductions in the burden of unnecessary regulation.

"Much of what Australia is currently attempting with its health reform agenda has been advanced in the UK system, and through the presence of Chris Horsey, we will have the chance to hear first-hand how that has been achieved", said Ms Seifert.

The ASMI Conference will be held on Thursday 12 November at Australian Technology Park, Redfern. It will focus on topics including the emergence of self care and the role of individuals, the evidence

base surrounding self care remedies, the regulatory environment for over-the-counter and complementary medicines, and the recent overseas experience in providing wider consumer access to medicines.

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI's mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy.
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