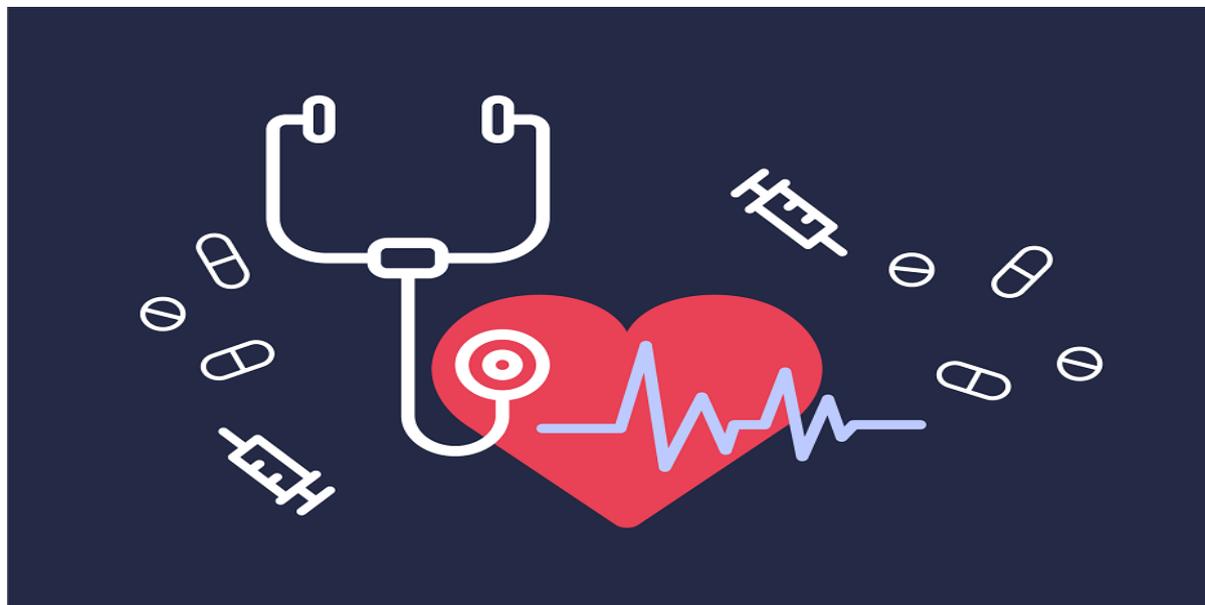


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Primary and community healthcare standards: unnecessary red tape?



POLITICIANS are forever ‘slashing red tape’. They just love saying that, because red tape is something that sounds bad and unnecessary, even though it often isn’t. And let’s not forget that it’s politicians that rolled out the red tape in the first place.

A recent announcement by the federal Health Minister was a rolling-out-the-red-tape announcement.

In summary, the health minister announced that by mid-2022, there would be new, non-mandatory standards for healthcare services such as dental practices, allied health services (optometry, audiology, podiatry and physiotherapy) but also for places with less professional standing, such as alternative medicine clinics.

According to the Chief Medical Officer of the Commission responsible for these primary and community healthcare standards, they will be “a game changer for the health sector in Australia, by giving practitioners the tools to be even better”.

Let’s pause here.

Why would you introduce formal standards to govern a section of the healthcare industry that is already good? Why is the health minister rolling out the red tape to make an industry perform “even better”?

Don't governments normally leave that to 'the market' and to 'competition'?

“In time, Australians will have confidence that when they visit a primary or community healthcare service accredited to the standards, they are receiving safe and high-quality health care – no matter the type of health service they are using or where they access it”, the Commission's Chief Medical Officer said by way of further explanation.

So, is the Government introducing these standards to reassure the public?

This seems odd, because GPs, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and so on are already generally trusted.

In fact, GPs and mainstream primary health services generally are already *mandatorily* accredited under the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

There seems to be no conceivable need for these health services to also get accredited under the new, *optional* Primary and Community Healthcare Standards.

And they probably won't get accredited, because the new, three optional standards are simply a subset of the old, eight existing standards.

The conclusion seems warranted that the only health services practitioners targeted by the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards are those not covered by the mandatory national standards.

Those practitioners would be practitioners often referred to as alternative medicine practitioners, such as acupuncture, massage, aromatherapy, herbal medicine practitioners.

What seems to matter most in these new standards is the Clinical Safety Standard. Meeting that standard would mean, for example, that an acupuncturist would need to make sure they would not infect a patient with dirty pins.

While that doesn't seem a bad idea, the fact remains: alternative health therapies tend to be therapies which are not clinically proven to be medically effective.

It seems a much better idea therefore to get alternative medical practitioners to meet the already existing, mandatory National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards. They can already opt in, but few if any do.

Now there's some *necessary* red tape!

Cute passwords are dangerous: how to make them safe



DO have trouble remembering your passwords? Have you solved that little problem by using a single password for everything? Do you realise that makes you a sitting duck for even the most dim-witted hacker?

Studies have shown that nine out of ten computer users know that using the same password across many sites is a security risk. Seven out of ten do it anyway.

Here's how it works as far as a hacker is concerned.

Most people use a single password. Easy to remember. But then there's the choice of password. Nothing is as difficult to pick if it can be anything, so people tend to use birthday, their partner's, or kids' names or ... their dog's name. All easily guessable passwords for a hacker.

And if you have written down your password on a sticky stuck to your computer, you're making it so much easier again. Just a photo posted on Facebook with your device in the background will do nicely.

Or post a photo of your dog along with its name ...

Now, if you are retired and no longer working for an organisation worth hacking, the risk of your computer being hacked reduces somewhat.

Organised criminal hackers prefer rich companies.

But ... there are bank robbers and street robbers.

Maybe passwords will be replaced by biometrics at some point to gain access to your devices and the apps on them, but for the time being we have to make do with a solution that was already in use in Roman times and even before: the password.

In the meantime, here are some tips on using safe passwords. You may not want to create safe passwords for every website or app. But the important ones need to be supersafe, like the passwords you use in banking,

1. Make your password long. Hackers use computer programs running through every possible combination of letters, numbers, and symbols to crack your password. The longer your password is, the longer this process takes. Passwords that are three characters long take less than a second to crack.
2. Randomly mix up symbols and numbers with letters. You could substitute a zero for the letter O or @ for the letter A, for example.
3. If there is information about you that is easily discoverable—such as your birthday, anniversary, address, city of birth, high school, and relatives' and pets' names—do not include them in your password.
4. Don't use the same password for more-than-one website or app. If you get hacked, then the damage the hacker can do is less.
5. Don't share your password with anyone else. Don't attach it to your iPad, laptop or desktop.
6. The more sensitive your information is, the more often you should change your password.
7. You can use an online password manager, which generate and store strong passwords on your behalf. These passwords are kept in an encrypted, centralized location, which you can access with a master password. Obviously, you need a very strong password for your password manager. The downsides of online password managers are obvious. They can be hacked. You don't know how good they are.

Used cars: Safety and emissions top priority



If your car has the highest safety rating you are 10 times more likely to survive or escape serious injury than if your car had the lowest safety rating.

The trouble with car safety is that newer models are safer but of course they cost more. However, some car models like the Toyota Camry have 5-star safety ratings on 2011 models. So, you don't need to purchase a brand new car to drive the safest car.

The latest used car safety ratings were released in early October as part of the NSW Government's road safety campaign 'Towards Zero' that has the ultimate goal of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries on NSW roads.

You can [click here](#) to access the 2021 Used Car Safety Ratings Brochure that rates the safety of used cars on a one-to-five star scale based on the latest world crash statistics.

If you're thinking of buying a car, it may also be worth keeping in mind that Australia is being urged to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. New analysis shows that Australia is very far away from achieving its carbon emissions reduction targets. Reports suggest Australia will need to increase the capacity of renewable energy and improve uptake of electric vehicles to reach its targets.

The CEO of the Electric Vehicle Council, Behyad Jafari has said that to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 all cars sold will need to be zero-emission

vehicles no later than 2035. Taking into consideration the lifespan of modern cars, buying a relatively new fuel-powered car may come with additional costs as future Australian governments may introduce disincentives or penalties to get high carbon emitting cars off the road.

Jafari also said Australia is one of the few developed countries on earth without fuel efficiency standards, without these in place Australia has become “a global dumping ground for high-exhaust vehicles that can’t be shifted elsewhere”. This should be kept in mind if you come across a cheap, safe used car, it may be a big polluter that could cost you down the track.

At this point in time electric vehicles are very expensive but they may save you getting caught up in the Australian Government’s inevitable catching up of the nation’s electric vehicle industry.