



the peak body and leading voice
for sonographers

Monday, 4 June 2018

Marcia Grant
A/ Director,
Preventative Health Policy
Population Health & Sport Division
Department of Health

E: Marcia.Grant@health.gov.au

RE: Development of the National Action Plan for Endometriosis

Dear Ms Grant,

Endometriosis is critical women's health issue that has been underacknowledged for far too long. We applaud the Australian Government for taking this step to begin to address this issue.

As the peak body for sonographers across Australia and New Zealand it is essential that the Australasian Sonographers Association is involved in the production of this National Action Plan, as well as its subsequent implementation. Sonographers perform a significant amount of the gynaecological medical diagnostic ultrasound examinations in Australian public and private radiology departments. The success of this work is in part reliant on good engagement with sonographers across Australia.

In the context of the limited time the association has had to consider the draft plan, we have some brief comments and recommended amendment to the statements of the Priority Areas. These are contained in the attachment to this letter *ASA feedback on the draft National Action Plan for Endometriosis*.

Very importantly, we request the government recognise sonographers by their professional name. We strongly urge the government to stop using 'ultrasound technician' and other redundant names which have been used historically to refer to sonographers.

Additionally, as the peak body for sonographers across Australia and New Zealand, could Appendix B be updated to include the Australasian Sonographers Association as an implementation partner. As mentioned above this is essential as this plan is agreed, and for implementation of this work.

Thank you for accepting late response to the online consultation. If there are any question on this feedback please contact James Brooks-Dowsett, Policy & Advocacy, phone on (03) 9552 0008 or email to policy@sonographers.org

We look forward to continuing to support the Government with this important work.

Your sincerely,

Dr Jennifer Alphonse PhD
President – Australasian Sonographers Association

Attachment A: ASA feedback on the draft National Action Plan for Endometriosis

About the Australasian Sonographers Association

The Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA) is the peak body and leading voice for sonographers and leads the profession in delivering excellence in sonography for the community.

The ASA has been representing Australian sonographers for over 25 years and promoting patient access to safe and quality medical diagnostic ultrasound by advocating for the role of sonographers in the healthcare system, promoting best practice in medical sonography and providing sonographer education and research.

With over 5,500 members and financial membership of more than 70% of Australia's sonographers, the ASA has a significant role in supporting and advising the profession on the highest standards to provide the best possible medical diagnostic ultrasound for patients, and represents the profession on the myriad of issues within medical diagnostic ultrasound and the broader healthcare sectors.

Feedback and requested amendment to the draft Action Plan

Please note the recommended amendment and comments below have been made against the Priority Areas 1 and 2, however should also be reflected in the corresponding sections of the Framework for Action (Appendix A).

Priority Area 1 – Awareness and education

Item 2.2: the ASA agrees with the proposal to including a menstrual education program, however the plan to equip school teachers and mental and healthcare staff to recognise symptoms could lead to a potential over-diagnosis of the disease.

This could be resolved through requiring educators / school education programs that identify students at risk to direct the respective student to consult their GP or other dedicated gynecological clinic; rather than just in-house counselling.

Item 2.3: These materials should also include information on the importance of transvaginal (TV) ultrasound imaging to normalise this as the standard imaging technique. Particularly specialised education campaigns that explains the medical diagnostic ultrasound imaging techniques and how the service is important to diagnosis of the condition.

Item 4.1: Similarly, information the importance of TV ultrasound imaging in diagnosing the condition should be made available to GPs along with the concise info on the prevalence and symptoms of endometriosis.

Item 4.2: “ultrasound technician” must be replaced with ‘sonographer’. Additionally, does “ultrasound specialist” refer to a sonologist, or is this intended to also refer to the sonographer professional?

The ASA is also concerned by the statement “Educate [sonographers], [sonologists], radiologists ... on the symptoms of endometriosis”. This will already be part of many sonographers/radiologists ordinary practice. “Educate” could potentially be replaced with ‘provide specialised training’ or ‘provide education opportunities’.

The ASA would gladly work with the Government on this as this topic is already part one of the many continuous profession development opportunities we provide for Australian sonographers.

Priority Area 2 - Clinical management and care

- Item 4: Some reference to ‘ensuring good access to medical diagnostic ultrasound and other imaging modalities to improve timely diagnosis and access to follow-up care’ should be included here. Item 4.6 is likely the best place to include this reference.