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## MEDIA RELEASE

### *Helping patients to avoid botched cosmetic procedures*

The Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission has tabled its report into cosmetic health service complaints, which makes 16 recommendations to the NSW Government.

The recommendations ensure that:

- the powers of the Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC) are robust enough to deal with the complexities of this industry;
- legislative and regulatory frameworks are strengthened to better protect the public from potential harm; and
- the public is well-informed about procedures, practitioners and complaint processes.

In particular, the Committee recommends that the Minister for Health review the current functions and powers of the HCCC to ensure it is able to sufficiently protect patients using cosmetic health services and health services more broadly (**Recommendation 1**).

Committee Chair Adam Crouch MP said the report follows an extensive public hearing and a detailed submissions process.

"We received evidence about some corporate operators that prioritise profits over patients, involving practitioners that compromise patient safety by using counterfeit products or employing unqualified staff," Mr Crouch said.

"The HCCC should have sufficient powers to enter and search clinics of this kind when it receives intelligence, and warn the public about particular operators that it has concerns about."

The Committee considers that patients should feel confident that their 'cosmetic surgeon' meets minimum criteria in terms of education, training and experience. The Committee therefore recommends that the Minister for Health continues to approach the COAG Health Council to restrict or protect the title 'cosmetic surgeon' at a national level. (**Recommendations 2, 3**).

"Any doctor can use the title 'cosmetic surgeon', whether they are a GP, cardio-thoracic surgeon or plastic surgeon. They may have decades of training and experience in surgery or have only completed a short course," said Mr Crouch said.

"There needs to be minimum criteria in this area of practice so patients are not misled."

A public education campaign involving advertising and social media is proposed, with a focus on targeted demographics, to raise awareness about the risks involved in cosmetic procedures and where to find relevant information (**Recommendations 5, 6**).

The Committee also recommends consideration of a one-stop-shop for patients to obtain information on procedures, practitioners, facilities and appropriate complaint pathways, either nationally or in NSW (**Recommendations 7, 8**).

Mr Crouch said the cosmetic health services industry is growing rapidly.

"Cosmetic clinics are emerging everywhere, including in retail contexts such as within shopping centres," Mr Crouch said.

"Advertising and social media has normalised cosmetic procedures and downplayed potential risks, which is why we want to better inform people, ensure safeguards are in place, and manage patient expectations."

During its inquiry, the Committee heard that NSW does not have regulation for lasers or IPL devices commonly used for cosmetic procedures such as the removal of hair, tattoos, pigmentation and skin rejuvenation. The Committee recommends regulation of these devices to ensure the safety of the public, preferably at a national level but, at the very least, in NSW (**Recommendations 10, 11**).

"The HCCC, State and Commonwealth Governments, agencies and entities are working to improve regulation of the cosmetic health services industry and better educate the community about potential risks," Mr Crouch said.

"The Committee's recommendations will complement this work to ensure the people of NSW are protected and well informed."

The Committee's report can be accessed at: [Report on cosmetic health service complaints in NSW](#)

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