

**Submission
No 64**

THE PROMOTION OF FALSE OR MISLEADING HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION OR PRACTICES

Name: Mrs Sonja Hardy
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**Re: Inquiry into the Promotion of False or Misleading
Health-Related Information or Practices**

While there clearly is a need for an independent organisation to protect the public from dangerous health practitioners, it appears the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission in practice seems more intent on protecting mainstream medical practitioners and practices from members of the public who dare question them. Allowing the proposed increase of powers for this organisation is setting a dangerous precedent, and impinging on the rights of people to make fully informed health care decisions. Instead the NSW Government should focus on making sure the HCCC adequately does the job it was originally set up to do.

Mainstream medical practices frequently cause harm, often resulting in death, to numerous patients every year. So community questioning of 'accepted medical practice' is NOT a bad thing, especially considering the level of fraud that has been exposed in the 'medical-industrial complex' (see [The Dangers of the Medical Industrial Complex](#) by Dr Mark Hyman). In fact, such questioning could be life-saving when you consider how often drugs have been passed off as 'safe' only to be recalled after significant harm, and often many deaths have resulted. Censoring debate about such issues, which appears to be the aim of the proposed changes, will cause further harm and more deaths. This would be a most unfortunate outcome, should the HCCC's powers be increased as proposed.

Mainstream medical practice is far too strongly influenced by the pharmaceutical industry, which is of great concern. (For example, see <http://onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=15796>). There is much evidence of corruption, with fraudulent industry-sponsored studies being used to promote dangerous drugs, and a revolving door between pharmaceutical companies, the US government and the FDA. (See <http://papers.ssrn.com>). Unfortunately FDA decisions affect many countries outside the USA – including Australia – where our TGA often seems to simply rubber stamp FDA decisions. Conflicts of interest are rife in Australia too, with advisors to government health authorities often having ties to the pharmaceutical industry. These are things the NSW Government and HCCC should be looking into – rather than targeting individuals and organisations that question 'accepted medical practice' which so often has been shown to be flawed and dangerous.

Just because a person is not a recognised health care practitioner does NOT mean s/he is not capable of intelligent research into health care issues, and of reporting such information in a way that allows much needed open public debate. Science is constantly evolving, and medical practitioners whose education is often industry-sponsored certainly do not have all the answers. Gagging open public debate by increasing the HCC's powers as proposed is a dangerous, draconian step backwards.

Sonja Hardy

