



Office of the Chief Professionalist

MEDIA RELEASE

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Chief Professionalist calls for less blame shifting and more listening

Australia's professional community has called for a reset in the face of a concerning trend in public statements undermining confidence in Australia's leading vaccination and health advice.

Australia's expert community takes its role to provide evidence-based, expert opinion very seriously.

Australia's inaugural Chief Professionalist Professor Deen Sanders OAM said: "*Whether it's a medical diagnosis, a legal opinion, a building design or advice about vaccine efficacy, professionals will always be driven by the needs of their patient or client and how their advice provides that person with the best benefit (or safety) for them.*"

"Seeking balance between that and wholesale public policy is the domain expertise of government in a civil democratic system. We recognise the significance of that challenge and respect those whose job it is make those decisions. We encourage the same respect in exchange."

In our view, a principal duty governments have is to build confidence and strengthen community resilience. In particular when confronted with challenges and fears, we are all called to be at our best.

"We are therefore concerned that the current tone of debate undermines that confidence, and that this may have larger and long-term consequences for our nation's capacity to respond to change and future crises." Professor Sanders said.

The latest example of concern comes from statements surrounding vaccine efficacy and lockdown strategies. Australia's expert-led response to the COVID-19 pandemic is something to be very proud of but it is important to recognise that on the particular topics of individual vaccines or differing lockdown strategies, expert advice is likely to differ as they consider a risk-based matrix of impacts at either an individual patient level or lockdown strategies at a regional level. The personal, social and/or economic impact of that advice should always be a matter for political leaders, acting on the full range of expertise relevant to their public policy needs. Right now, the needs of our shared community and families demand more of us as experts, as professionals and as civil leaders.

Professor Sanders encourages all Australians to trust the advice of their professional advisors. *"Your experts have trained long and hard to provide you with the best advice for your circumstances. Listen also to the advice of your governments. When governments and professionals respect each other's role, the community can be confident that we're all in this together."*

ENDS

Australian Council of Professions

The Australian Chief Professionalist was appointed as a global first in April 2021 by the Australian Council of Professions (ACoP). A Professionalist is "*one who professionalises an occupation*" (Merriam-Webster) and who is "*an advocate of professionalism*" (Oxford English Dictionary). This innovative appointment was inspired by the highly valued Chief Medical/Health Officers, the Chief Scientist, Chief Economist, the Chief Engineer, Chief Data Scientist, etc. The inaugural Chief Professionalist is Professor Deen Sanders OAM who is the public face of ACoP's mission to government and the community as well as to magnify and personalise that mission. Deen engages with national leaders as well as the broader community to advocate for the purpose and value of the professions, professionals and professionalism.

The Australian Council of Professions (ACoP) is the unifying alliance of Professional Associations that represents close to 1 million Australian professionals including engineers, healthcare and computer professionals, veterinarians and accountants. A not-for-profit organisation, we have been acknowledged by the community, industry and government as the thought leaders advocating for the Professions, Professionals and Professionalism since 1971.

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