

Communiqué

February 2019 meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

Introduction

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (the Board) works in partnership with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to implement the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme). Details about individual Board members can be found on the Board's [website](#).

The Board's most recent quarterly meeting was held in Melbourne on 1 March, the first meeting for 2019. The Board meets as the Registration and Notification Committee (RNC) in between these meetings to consider registration and notification (complaint) matters about individual practitioners. The Board then meets to consider policy and other matters.

We publish this communiqué on our website. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

Board meeting in Melbourne

The Board met after the two day National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Combined meeting. The Board considered several matters at its meeting, including monitoring reports from various Approved programs of study – the reports are provided periodically by the Board's appointed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee.

The Board also concluded its annual strategic planning session during its February meeting, including discussing current strategic initiatives. During this session, the Board considered two draft brochures for distribution across the country. The two brochures will detail:

- why someone would become, and what it means to be, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, and
- the other one focused on the benefits of employing an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner.

The Board will continue to closely link its strategic initiatives with the broader work of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy](#).

Review of registration standards

As has been previously highlighted in our communiqués and newsletters, the Board has been busy reviewing its core registration standards. The review process has been completed and the revised draft registrations standards are now at the approval stage. The scheduled review means the new registration standards will reflect that the Grandparenting provisions of the National Law¹ have expired..

The registration standards that have been reviewed are:

- professional indemnity insurance arrangements (PII)
- continuing professional development (CPD)
- recency of practice (RoP)
- English language skills, and

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander registration standard.

The Board was very grateful to have received so much thoughtful and considered feedback from a wide variety of individuals and entities. The public consultation period has now closed.

Defining interactive CPD

Issues of particular interest from stakeholders included the changes to the CPD registration standard, where it is proposed to simplify requirements to 20 hours of CPD per year which includes five hours of 'interactive' CPD.

As explained in the draft revised registration standard, 'interactive' does not necessarily mean leaving home to attend a course. (Some feedback received thought there may be an impact to service delivery if staff had to leave for periods of time to attend formal CPD events.) Interactive CPD may be online or it may be conducted with other practitioners (not necessarily from the same profession) at work.

The main thing is that practitioners choose CPD that relates directly to the jobs they are employed to do – whether clinical, administrative or something different. The Board does not define your scope of practice. What you do as a registered practitioner is generally determined by what role you are employed to do.

First aid certificates are no longer required

Other feedback focussed on concerns about the removal of the (currently required) first aid certificate in the RoP registration standard. As the Board does not define scope of practice for registrants, it knows that not everyone works in a job where the first aid certificate is required – if it is, it is generally provided by the workplace/employer.

While it's good for everyone to have a current first aid certificate, the Board must be careful not to put an unintended barrier in place by establishing requirements that are not necessary for all.

Next steps for the review

The next step in the process is for Australia's Health Ministers, through the Ministerial Council, to consider approving the draft revised registration standards.

We'll keep you up to date on the timing of the changes. In the meantime, the currently published [registration standards](#) remain in force.

Medications notations on some practitioners' registrations

Recently, AHPRA, on behalf of the Board, sent letters to some registered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners and many of the major employers, about a Board decision in December to change some conditions that appear on some registered Health Practitioners' registration to notations.

During the Grandparenting period (which finished in 2015), there were some practitioners who became registered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners due to their vast experience and previous qualifications. Some of those qualifications did not always include some units of study related to medications that are now included in all training programs (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice from the various RTOs around the country). So, these people had either a 'condition' or a 'notation' included on their registration.

The Board decided in December to change all 'conditions' (which imply that the Board will monitor and expect a practitioner to have a condition removed) to 'notations' (which is just a statement that provides information for anyone looking up a person on the National Register). The people with notations on their registration about medications **do not need to do anything** about it if they don't want to. Nothing has changed for them or for the other registered Health Practitioners who do not have a notation on their registration.

If someone would like to remove the notation, they need to contact an [Approved program of study](#) and ask to complete those units. Once successfully completed, the person would provide that evidence to the Board and ask to have the notation removed.

It is no longer possible to apply for registration with the Board without having completed an Approved program of study. The Grandparenting period finished at the end of June 2015.

What has changed?

Nothing has changed other than the way the information is displayed on the register. All registered Health Practitioners (whether they have a notation about medications on their registration or not) can continue to do what they are doing in their jobs. Those who have a notation about medicines removed from their registration are considered by the Board to be qualified the same as someone who has graduated and become registered using an Approved program of study.

Clinical work – it's up to you and your employer

Not all registered Health Practitioners work in clinical areas and even those that do, do not necessarily handle or administer medications. For this profession, it is up to the employer whether clinical work, including working with medications, is included in someone's scope of practice – not the Board. The Board does not say what someone can or cannot do in their jobs. All the Board says is that if you want to undertake a particular practice (e.g. giving immunisations), you must be qualified and competent to do this. This might mean extra study or experience, or working 'under orders' from someone who has prescribing rights (such as a Nurse Practitioner or Medical Practitioner). It also depends on the Drugs and Poisons Legislation in the state or territory in which you work.

The Board does not have influence or determine what work can or cannot be done by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners. However, the Board does say that someone who is registered with the Board is qualified to work in a broad range of types of practice, including clinical work.

Need more information?

If anyone has any questions about the change from 'conditions' to 'notations', they should ring the Board's Executive Officer, Jill Humphreys, on 03 8708 9066.

National Scheme news

'Let's talk about it' videos launched

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has [launched a series of new videos](#) to support the public and registered health practitioners as they go through the notification process.

The video series, called 'Let's talk about it', explains what happens when concerns are raised with the regulator, provides easy to follow information about the notifications process and addresses common questions, so consumers and health practitioners know what to expect when they interact with AHPRA and National Boards.

There are three videos:

- [A notification has been made about me](#) – features five health practitioners who work within the scheme, directed at health practitioners who have had a notification made about them.
- [I have a concern, am I in the right place?](#) – targets members of the public who have a concern but aren't yet sure whether AHPRA is the right place for them to raise it.
- [I have raised a concern with AHPRA](#) – provides information for individuals who have just raised a concern with AHPRA.

The videos sit alongside other written resources available on the [AHPRA website](#).

Practitioners can view the videos on the AHPRA and National Board websites or from their [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channel and can join the conversation by following AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) and use the hashtag #letstalkaboutit and tag @AHPRA.

Legislative amendments on mandatory reporting and fake practitioners

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 (Qld) (the Bill) has now been passed by the Queensland Parliament. The amendments include revisions to the mandatory reporting requirements for treating practitioners and an extension of sanctions for statutory offences.

The changes to the National Law¹ intend to support registered practitioners to seek help for a health issue (including mental health issues). They will also increase the penalties (including the introduction of custodial sentences) for some offences under the National Law, including where a person holds themselves out to be a registered health practitioner when they are not.

AHPRA and National Boards will now work to implement these amendments. This will require working closely with professional bodies, employers and state and territory health departments to help spread the message that practitioners should be supported to seek help about their health issues.

The passing of the Bill in Queensland marks the second set of legislative amendments to the National Law since the start of the National Scheme² in 2010.

When commenced, the amendments will apply in all states and territories except Western Australia, where mandatory reporting requirements will not change.

Practitioners can read a news item about the amendments on the [AHPRA website](#) or the Bill on the [Queensland Legislation website](#).

National Boards and AHPRA host research summit

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) 2019 Research Summit took place on 27 February 2019 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The Summit centered on asking how research can be harnessed to strengthen regulation and enhance patient safety to contribute to improved health outcomes.

Led by the AHPRA and the National Boards, the all-day Research Summit hosted 17 speakers and drew more than 300 participants from National and State/Territory Board and Committee members, AHPRA staff, co-regulatory bodies, representatives from accreditation authorities and key partners.

With the theme Optimising research for regulatory effectiveness, the Research Summit explored the National Scheme's evolving approaches to risk assessment, lessons from research into notifications, and future opportunities to utilise smart data. At the heart of discussions was asking how we can use data and research to improve regulatory processes and ultimately contribute to safer care for patients.

From the University of Toronto, Professor Zubin Austin's stirring keynote address highlighted that competency assessment has emerged as a dominant issue for regulators, educators and employers worldwide; Professor Austin called for more attention on notions of teamwork, emotional intelligence, and genuine practitioner engagement as important concepts in defining and evaluating competency.

Read more in the [media release](#) about the summit.

Renewing your registration

The registration period commences on 1 December each year and registrations must be renewed by 30 November. If you haven't renewed your registration for this year, your name will have dropped off the national register. If your name drops off the register, you may no longer use the protected title of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner.

Please call 08 8901 8562 if you have any questions or need any help.

Are your contact details up to date?

It's important to make sure that your contact details registered with AHPRA are up to date so you don't miss reminders to renew or important information from the Board. You can check your contact details via the [Login icon](#) at the top right of the AHPRA website.

Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

If you cannot remember your user ID or password, contact us [online](#) or call 1300 419 495.

Further information

The Board publishes a range of information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners on its [website](#). Practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Practitioners.

For more information about registration, notifications or other matters relevant to the Scheme please refer to the information published on www.ahpra.gov.au. Alternatively, contact AHPRA by an [online enquiry form](#) or phone 1300 419 495.

Follow AHPRA on social media

Connect with AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) to receive information about important topics for your profession and participate in the discussion.



Keep in touch with the Board

Call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 or 08 8901 8562 if you:

- have any questions
- need help filling in forms, or
- are having trouble explaining to your employer about requirements. You can ask your employer to call this number.

To contact the Board, please call Jill Humphreys on 03 8708 9066 or send an email to jill.humphreys@ahpra.gov.au.

Renee Owen

Chair

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

14 March 2019

¹The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

²National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).