

## Communiqué

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### October 2013 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 (the National Scheme). Details about individual Board members can be found on the Board's [website](#).

The Board's last bimonthly meeting was held on 23 October 2013 at Yarrabee House on the corner of Botanic and Hackney Roads in Adelaide. This meeting was the second under the Board's new bimonthly meeting schedule. A stakeholder forum on registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners was held immediately before the Board meeting.

Future Board meetings for the 2013/14 financial year will be on 19 December 2013 in Sydney, 26 February 2014 in Brisbane, 23 April 2014 in Perth and 25 June 2014 in Melbourne.

#### A forum on registration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners – Adelaide

On 23 October 2013, the Board held a stakeholder forum in Adelaide to promote registration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Over 45 health workers, their employers and peak bodies attended to listen to the Board Chair's presentation on registration, meet Board members and AHPRA staff and ask questions.

There were several questions asked in relation to the registration process and, in particular, capability statement on the role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

The Board Chair, Peter PangQuee, undertook to consider all the issues raised, in particular, the request for a capability statement to help registrants, their employers, and other health professionals better under the capability of the registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

The Board has scheduled future stakeholder forums as follows:

<b>Date and time</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Wednesday 18 December 2013	Sydney	Aboriginal Health College
Wednesday 26 February 2014	Brisbane	To be confirmed
Wednesday 23 April 2014	Perth	To be confirmed
Wednesday 25 June 2014	Melbourne	To be confirmed

To register your interest in attending the Board's stakeholder forums, or to request more information, contact [ATSIHPBA-calendar@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:ATSIHPBA-calendar@ahpra.gov.au).

## Board decisions

### 2013 renewal late fee waived

The Board has decided to waive the late fee for the 2013 renewal period.

About 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners with general registration were due to renew by 30 November.

Under the National Law<sup>1</sup>, renewal applications received after the registration expiry date would incur a late payment fee in addition to the annual renewal fee.

About 72 per cent of practitioners had so far renewed their registration. This is the second time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners have renewed their registration since the profession joined the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) in July 2012.

The National Board wants to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners by removing any barriers to them renewing their registration to practise. In waiving the late fee, the Board is encouraging individuals to renew their registration before the end of the late period or they will risk their registration lapsing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners who do not apply to renew their registration by 31 December 2013 will have lapsed registration. They will be removed from the [national register of practitioners](#), and may not be able to practise their profession.

Under the National Law, a practitioner must be registered if they wish to, or their employer requires them to use one of the protected titles: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner, Aboriginal health practitioner, or Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. Also, a practitioner may need to be registered as part of their employment requirements, even if the protected title is not used. That is, if their employer requires the practitioner to hold registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner as a requirement of the job, then the practitioner must be registered to be employed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, whose application is received by 31 December, can continue practising while their application is processed, as long as they meet all other registration requirements.

### Review of criminal history registration standards

The Board has agreed to join the other 13 National Boards in the National Scheme to undertake public consultation to review its criminal history standard. The consultation period started on 25 October and will **close on 23 December 2013**.

National Boards are asking the community and health practitioners to have their say on the standards registered health practitioners must meet for criminal history.

The [Criminal history registration standard](#) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice sets out what the Board will consider when deciding whether a health practitioner's criminal history is relevant to their practice of their profession. The National Law determines what information practitioners must declare to Boards about their criminal history.

Please provide written submissions by email, marked 'Consultation - registration standards' to [standard.consultation@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:standard.consultation@ahpra.gov.au) by close of business on 23 December 2013.

The public consultation package can be view on the Board's website under [Current consultations](#).

## [Review of Guidelines for advertising, proposed Social media policy and shared Code of conduct](#)

After public consultation on the *Guidelines for advertising, Social media policy* and shared *Code of conduct* closed on 27 May 2013, the Board reviewed the feedback, approved the final content, and agreed to consider a common commencement date at its next meeting as part of an implementation plan.

## [Practitioner audit – your self-declared criminal history check during registration renewal may be audited](#)

The National Law allows the Board to check through and audit the statement you made about your criminal history in your application to renew your registration. The Board has agreed to commence an audit on the criminal history statements made by registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in 2013/14. An audit of the other [mandatory registrations standards](#) will start the following year.

## [Supervision guidelines public consultation](#)

The Board has drafted guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and their supervisors. These guidelines may be used in a range of supervision arrangements, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners who:

- are returning to practice after an absence of greater than three years
- have had a significant change to scope of practice
- have a condition or undertaking requiring supervision from a health, performance or conduct matter, or
- have a condition related to adequacy of qualifications.

These draft guidelines will be released soon for a six-week public consultation period.

## [Registration](#)

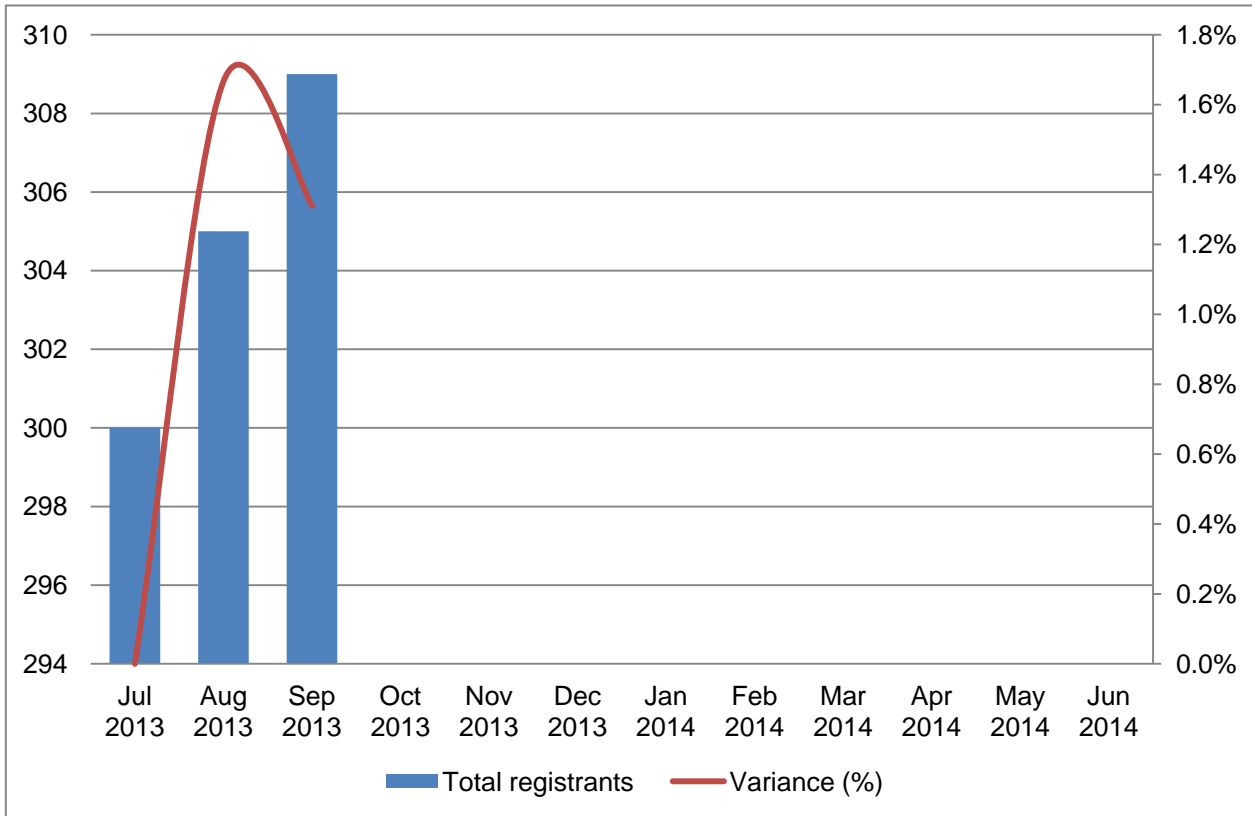
### [Current registration figures](#)

The Board has analysed its registration data and produced a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants to share with the profession and community. The Board shares these breakdowns each quarter on its [website](#). The following breakdowns are included:

- state and territory by registration type
- age by registration type, and
- gender by state and territory by registration type.

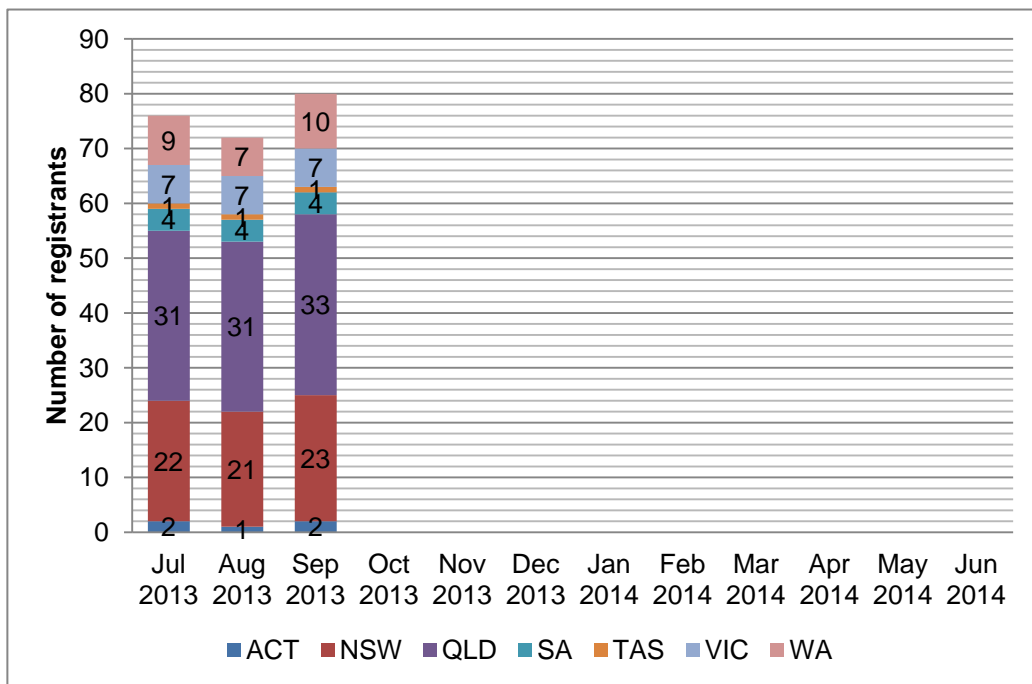
In addition to the above statistics, this *Communiqué* provides stakeholders with an overview of specific data over a period of time.

By the end of September 2013 there were 309 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners throughout Australia. This is a 1.3% increase in comparison to the previous month.



Overwhelmingly, registrants practice out of the Northern Territory, with 229 registrants nominating the NT as their principal place of practice (PPP). This represents 74% of all registrants of this profession. This is a 1% decrease in comparison to the previous month.

The number of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in other states and territories is illustrated in the graph below. As in the previous month, Queensland hosts the second largest registrant base for this profession, with 11% of registrants nominating this state as their PPP. This is followed by New South Wales (7%), Western Australia (3%), and Victoria (2%).



## Who should be registered?

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), requires a practitioner to be registered if they wish to, or their employer requires them to use one of the protected titles. The protected titles are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner
- Aboriginal health practitioner, or
- Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

It is also the case that a practitioner may be required to be registered as part of their employment requirements, even if the protected title is not used.

The current wording implies that an employer must have their staff use a protected title for anyone performing the functions of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. In fact, an employer may call a job anything they like, but if the employer requires the practitioner to hold registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner as a requirement of the job, the practitioner must be registered to be employed. While the employer's requirements are not part of the National Law, it is another situation that may apply to a practitioner without using a protected title.

The Board's [registration standards](#) and application forms for registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner are available on the Board's website at [www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms](http://www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms).

## What is a condition on a health practitioner's registration?

The Board, through its Registration and Notification Committee, can impose a condition on the registration of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner or student. A condition aims to restrict a practitioner's practice in some way, to protect the public.

Current conditions which restrict a practitioner's practice are published on the publicly available national register of practitioners. When the Board decides the condition is no longer required to ensure safe practise, it is removed and no longer published on the register.

Examples of conditions include requiring the practitioner to:

- complete specified further education or training within a specified period
- undertake a specified period of supervised practice
- do, or refrain from doing, something in connection with the practitioner's practice
- manage their practice in a specified way
- report to a specified person at specified times about the practitioner's practice, or
- not employ, engage or recommend a specified person, or class of persons.

There may also be conditions related to a practitioner's health (such as psychiatric care or drug screening). The details of health conditions are not usually published on the publicly available register of practitioners.

## What is a notation on a health practitioner's registration?

A notation records a limitation on the practice of a registrant. This is used by the Board to describe and explain the scope of a practitioner's practice by noting the limitations on that practice. The notation does not change the practitioner's scope of practice but may reflect the requirements of a registration standard.

## Accreditation

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee completed its public consultation of its draft *Accreditation standards and accreditation process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice* on 6 September 2013.

The committee has considered the feedback. The Committee will put its recommended accreditation standards and processes to the Board at an out-of-session meeting in late November.

If approved by the Board, the accreditation standards and processes will then be used to assess programs of study and the education providers that offer the programs to ensure that they produce graduates who have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to competently practise the profession.

You can receive updates from the Accreditation Committee by completing the [online form](#).

### **Know the National Law**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia is established under the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#), as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

In each *Communiqué* we will explain a section of the National Law to help improve your understanding of the context in which the Board operates. In this *Communiqué* we will feature the role of the Board.

Section 31 establishes 14 National Boards to regulate 14 health professions. The Board is listed as the Board established to regulate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health profession.

This section also describes the Board as a body corporate with perpetual succession; and may sue and be sued in its corporate name.

Section 32 describes the Board's powers needed to exercise its functions. These do not include the power to enter into contracts; or employ staff; or acquire, hold, dispose of property. This is done by AHPRA on the Board's behalf.

Section 33 describes the membership of the nine member Board. This is six registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner members and three community members. The six practitioner members are made up of one each from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia, and one from Tasmania, or Northern Territory or the Australian Capital Territory.

Section 34 describes who is eligible for appointment to the Board by the Ministerial Council. Practitioner members must be registered as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. In contrast, community members must not be currently or previously registered as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. Also, a person is not eligible to be appointed if at any time, they have been found guilty of an offence that makes the person unfit to hold office.

### **Peter PangQuee**

Chair, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

16 December 2013