

Communiqué

February 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).

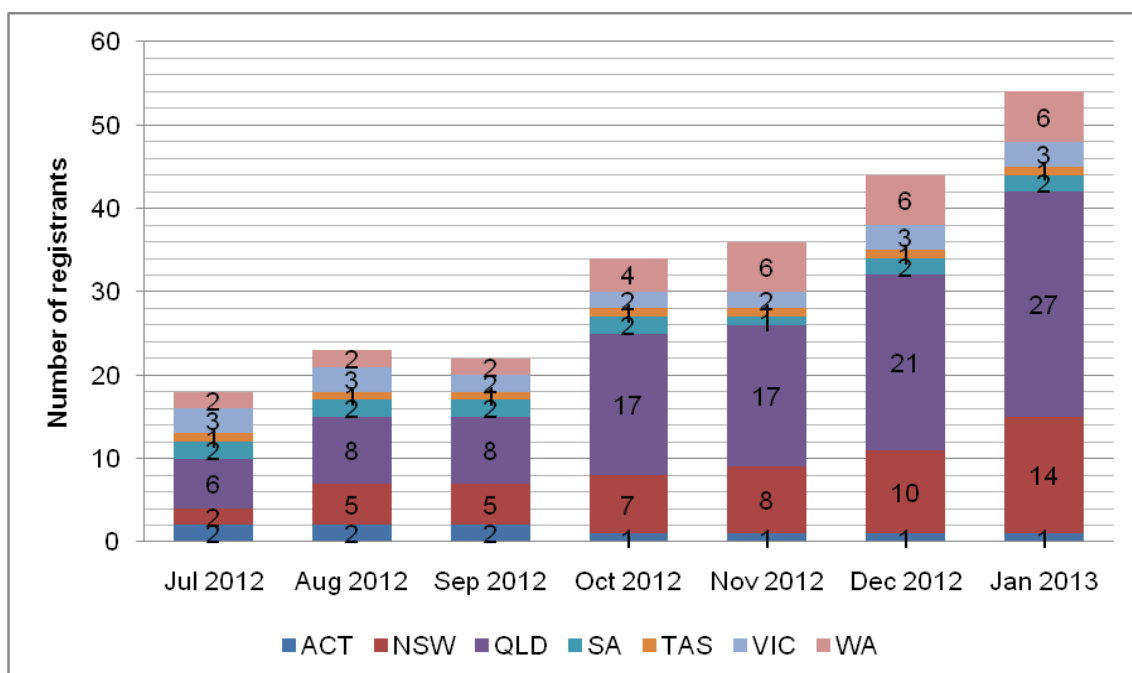
Details on individual Board members can be found on the Board's [website](#).

Registration

By the end of January 2013 there were 274 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners throughout Australia. This is an eight per cent decrease from the previous month, which had 298 registrants. The decrease in the number of registrants was due to the large number of registrants who did not renew by the 30 November 2012 renewal deadline.

Overwhelmingly, registrants practise out of the Northern Territory, with 220 practitioners nominating the NT as their principle place of practice (PPP). This represents 80.3 per cent of all registrants of this profession.

The number of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in other states and territories is illustrated in the graph below. Queensland hosts the second largest registrant base for this profession, with 10% of practitioners nominating this state as their principal place of practice. This is followed by New South Wales (five per cent), Western Australia (two per cent), and Victoria (one per cent).



Who should be registered?

Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are working as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners **and** are required by their employer to use any of the following protected titles, must be registered by law. This group also must meet the Board's registration standards in order to practise in Australia.

The protected titles are:

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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers who are not required by their employer to use a protected title do not need to be registered, and can continue to work using their current titles (for example, 'sexual health worker', or 'drug and alcohol worker', or 'mental health worker').

However, if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker's job involves direct clinical care of patients, the Board highly recommends that they apply for registration in the interest of public safety. Registration is a way of ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered.

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.

Accreditation

The establishment and operation of the Board's accreditation function has been identified as one of its highest priorities for 2013.

The Board is one of three that joined the National Scheme in 2012 that has decided to exercise accreditation functions through a committee of the board, as provided for under subsection 43(1)(b) of the National Law.

The four-member Accreditation Committee held its third meeting on 12 March 2013. At this stage the Committee has three members: Elaine Duffy (Chair), Sharon Wallace and Norma Lukies. A call for Nominations or Expressions of Interest for the fourth Committee member closed on 1 April 2013. The Board will undertake a formal selection process to appoint the fourth member.

From May 2013, the Committee plans to meet monthly. The Committee has held a joint meeting with the Board on 27 February and plans further joint meetings on 24 April and 26 September in Melbourne. These joint meetings enable the Board and the Committee to clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities, and agree on timelines for key milestones of this priority function.

The Committee's main focus at the moment is on developing a draft accreditation standard for approval by the Board. At this stage the Committee expects to begin preliminary consultation on the content of the draft proposed accreditation standard in the first half 2013.

AHPRA's Accreditation Unit has been preparing resources to help the Committee develop accreditation standards and processes, as well as a new accreditation cycle, as quickly as possible. These resources include comparing accreditation standards and processes, including for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector qualifications, and documents which the Committee can use as a starting point for developing its own standards and processes.

Regular updates will be published online and in future *Communiqués*.

Other Board activities

Board vacancy

The vacancy on the Board for a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner from Queensland is expected to be considered by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council by the end of April. Once finalised, the Board will formally announce the appointment through this *Communiqué*.

Current consultations

From time to time the Board seeks feedback from practitioners, members of the public and other stakeholders on proposed standards, guidelines, codes and policies. We encourage your active feedback on these proposals, so please keep a watch of the consultation section of Board's website at www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/News/Consultations. Past consultations are also accessible from this section.

Projects

A Unique and Valued Profession: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers

Two Board members, Peter Pangquee (Board Chair) and Jenny Poelina appeared on a live interactive panel discussion broadcast on the Rural Health Education Foundation's satellite network on 26 February 2013. The panel discussion can be viewed on Rural Health Education Foundation's website.

The panel discussion is part of a multimedia package project aiming to improve non-Aboriginal health professionals, employers and managers' understanding of and respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker role and to foster improved inter-professional relationships and increase the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers within the primary health care team.

The free multimedia DVD package consists of a half hour documentary, the live and interactive panel discussion, a learning guide and filmed segments and interviews. Orders can be made from the Rural Health Education Foundation's website.

The Board recommends this multimedia package to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners seeking resources to promote the importance of their role to fellow health practitioners in a primary health care setting.

Reviewing the qualifications and competency standards for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Workers

The Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council is currently reviewing the Health Training Package, in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care qualifications. Three Board members, Peter Pangquee (Board Chair), Jenny Poelina and Karrina DeMasi are members of the Industry Reference Group and Subject Matter Expert Group for this project. For more information, go to www.cshisc.com.au/develop/continuous-improvement-of-training-packages/training-packages-review-streamlining/training-packages-review/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health-workers/.

Clinical Log Book for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers

Board members have been actively involved in reviewing and updating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Health Practitioner Clinical Logbook. For more information, go to www.hwa.gov.au/work-programs/workforce-innovation-and-reform/atsihw/log-books.

Peter Pangquee

Chairperson

29 April 2013