

Communiqué

May 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 Brisbane on 29 May, the second 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 Brisbane

The Board met with key Indigenous workforce contacts in Queensland Health on the evening before the meeting. The Board considered several matters at its meeting, including monitoring reports from various approved programs of study. The reports are provided by the Board's appointed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee.

The Board finalised the wording for two brochures, after receiving very helpful feedback from stakeholders. The brochures cover:

- why someone would become, and what it means to be, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, and
- 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](#).

Board members were filmed as part of the producing a series of short clips promoting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice profession and were photographed by local Aboriginal photographer Claudine Thornton.

Visit to Southern Queensland Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Inala Indigenous Health Service)

The Board visited the Southern Queensland Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Inala Indigenous Health Service).

Clinical Director Professor Noel Hayman, Australia's first Aboriginal physician and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group member, took the Board on a tour of his clinic which services the health needs of 10,000 patients. His unique model of care provides specialist clinics including ophthalmology, cardiology, rheumatology, geriatrics, paediatrics and psychology with practitioners who practise within the public health hospital system ensuring continuity of care for patients. Professor

Hayman currently employs Aboriginal Health Workers in his practice and after discussions with Board members welcomes the opportunity to add Aboriginal Health Practitioners to his over 60 staff.



Photo caption: Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia visiting the Southern Queensland Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Inala Indigenous Health Service). Pictured from left to right: Renee Owen (Chair), Margaret McCallum, Bruce Brown, Leanne Quirino, Bonny King, Celia Harnas and David Nicholls.

New Accreditation standard approved

At its May meeting, the Board approved a new *Accreditation standard* for the profession. The National Law¹, that is administered by AHPRA and the National Boards together, requires that an *Accreditation standard* is developed by the Board's accreditation authority. Before being put to the Board for approval, there is extensive and wide ranging consultation.

It is against the *Accreditation standard* that programs of study and the education providers that provide them are assessed. If a program of study is accredited, a report is provided to the Board and it is asked to approve the accredited program of study. Once approved, the program of study is listed on the Board's website under [approved programs of study](#) and it is only once it is published on the website that the qualification can be used for the purposes of registration.

Only people who hold qualifications from an approved program of study can be qualified for registration.

It is not possible for someone to hold a variety of qualifications that they think might meet the minimum standard required to qualify for registration. A person *must* be qualified in an 'approved program of study'.²

¹ Health Practitioner Regulation Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

² Until 1 July 2015, there was a grandparenting period where people with other qualifications and experience could apply for registration but that has finished and all applicants for registration must hold a qualification from an approved program of study.

If someone is in that situation – has different qualifications and experience – they can approach an approved program of study and seek recognition of prior learning and if possible, attain a qualification from that approved program of study.

The major change to the new *Accreditation standard* is that it is no longer linked directly to the *HLT40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care Practice* program of study. Any program of study can apply for accreditation with the Board's [Accreditation Committee](#) – for example, a diploma course, or any course that can meet the minimum requirements described in the *Accreditation standard*.

Importantly, the *Accreditation standard* won't come into effect until 2020, giving education providers plenty of time to adapt to the changes.

The Board would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of its Accreditation Committee:

- Adjunct Profession Elaine Duffy (Chair)
- Ms Norma Solomon
- Ms Sharon Wallace, and
- Ms Elizabeth Shuttle.

Together this committee assesses, monitors and inspects all of the programs of study and have managed to accredit all programs of study eligible for accreditation in a very short time frame.

Medications notations on some practitioners' registrations

Even though we reported on this in our last communique, we've still been hearing that some people are unsure of what it means when we say: if you had a 'condition' on your registration about medications units; it is now changed to a 'notation'.

Earlier in the year, 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 2018 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 registered training organisations (RTOs)) around the country. So, these people had either a 'condition' or a 'notation' included on their registration.

The Board decided in 2018 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](#)).

Anyone 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](#) provider 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 national 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 medications

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 carry out 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 f

Practitioners' responsibility to support public health programs

Australia's health regulators have reminded health practitioners about their responsibility to support public health programs, including vaccination.

Regulators have spoken out to support public safety, given mounting concerns about a five-year high in measles cases and an early spike in flu cases this year.

AHPRA and the National Boards for 16 professions have urged more than 740,000 registered health practitioners to take seriously their responsibilities for public health, including by helping patients to be protected from preventable illnesses.

AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher reminded practitioners that supporting public health programs, including vaccination and immunisation, and not promoting anti-vaccination views were regulatory responsibilities.

'Registered health practitioners have a regulatory responsibility to support patients to understand the evidence-based information available,' Mr Fletcher said.

National Boards set codes, standards and guidelines, including about protecting and promoting the health of individuals and the community, which they expect registered health practitioners to meet.

'Practitioners are of course entitled to hold personal beliefs, but they must ensure that they do not contradict or counter public health campaigns, including about the efficacy or safety of public health initiatives,' he said.

If practitioners do not comply and meet the professional standards set by their National Board, regulators can and do take action.

National Boards and AHPRA have taken action to manage risk to the public, in response to a number of concerns raised about practitioners (including medical practitioners, nurses and chiropractors) who have advocated against evidence-based vaccination programs. This has included restricting practitioners' practice pending further investigation, when there was a serious risk to the public.

Health Practitioners can read the [media release](#) on the Board's website.

AHPRA launches WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation

In April, AHPRA officially launched as a designated World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation in the Western Pacific Region.

AHPRA, working in partnership with the National Boards, joins a list of over 800 institutions in more than 80 countries supporting WHO programs in areas such as nursing development, communicable diseases, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies.

Strengthening the regulation of the health workforce is an important part of the WHO's global strategy to build the human resources needed for access to safe and quality healthcare across the world.

Read the full media release on the [AHPRA website](#).

Information Publications Scheme – promoting accessibility of our information

From 1 June 2019, AHPRA and National Boards are required to comply with the Information Publication Scheme (IPS) established under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth). The IPS promotes openness and transparency and aims to reduce the number of Freedom of Information applications through the proactive publication of information. This requires that certain information and documents be made publicly available.

AHPRA and National Boards have worked together to implement the IPS and information has been recently published about it on the [AHPRA website](#).

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

19 June 2019