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Message from the Presiding Member

Welcome to the December 2016 newsletter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (the Board).

The year seems to have flown by. The Board has met four times this year and we have met as the Registration and Notifications Committee (RNC) much more often, to consider applications for registration and complaints made about our practitioners.

While our profession is the smallest within the National Scheme¹, we are the fastest growing this year with upwards of 600 members. I hope you have renewed your registration and that the process was easy, via the website.

The Board is particularly pleased to be involved in the scheme's first steps on the journey to developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. As presiding member, I will be involved in a workshop with Indigenous leaders from across Australia in February to hold the first discussions about what we can do, as a scheme, to close the gap.

The Board met in Sydney in November and we were also very pleased to be able to have a tour of the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service, a real eye-opener for those of us from AMSs in more regional and remote areas. Our thanks go out to all the staff at Redfern AMS for giving up much of their time to show us around. What great work they do!



National Board members and Redfern AMS staff

Accreditation of training programs

The Board's Accreditation Committee undertakes accreditation functions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice in the national scheme regulating health practitioners.

The Accreditation Committee has met three times and accredited four more registered training organisations' (RTOs) programs in 2016. This brings the total number of RTOs delivering accredited programs to nine and the total number of programs to 16 (which includes the various approved campuses of the one program). This means graduates from all these programs can now qualify to register as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners.

The Accreditation Committee has continued to monitor the accredited programs, including evaluation of submissions in response to conditions imposed on accreditation. The committee has worked during 2016 to further develop its approach to monitoring accredited and approved programs.

The Accreditation Committee has assessed a further four RTOs' programs and will make accreditation decisions about two of these by the end of 2016 and the other two in early to mid 2017.

The list of accredited programs is available on the [Accreditation Committee's FAQ](#) page under the heading *Is my program accredited?*

If you or someone you know has graduated from a program of study that was not approved, you should call AHPRA to see if you can go along one of two pathways for consideration for registration, depending on when your RTO applied for accreditation, when it was accredited and importantly, when that accreditation decision was approved by the Board.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry and safe holiday season. I look forward to another busy year in 2017, one where more jobs are available for our dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners.

Renee Owen

Presiding Member, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

¹ The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

Reminder to renew online to avoid lapsed registration

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners who did not apply to renew their registration by 30 November must renew in December to avoid lapsed registration.

Under the National Law, registered health practitioners are responsible for renewing their registration on time each year. If you do not renew online by 31 December 2016 you will have lapsed registration. You will be removed from the [national register of practitioners](#) and will not be able to use the protected title or practise as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

If your application for general registration is received during the one-month late period, you can continue practising while your application is processed.

Further information

Useful information about renewal is on the Board's website:

- [Registration standards](#)
- [Registration renewal](#)
- [Renewal FAQ](#)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia commits to closing the gap

The Board is pleased to announce its involvement in the development of a National Scheme-wide strategy that seeks to improve patient safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Protecting the public is our primary purpose and, as a Board within the National Scheme, we are uniquely placed to make a contribution to this significant work.

The Board will be involved throughout this ongoing work, starting with joining the initial workshop in February facilitated by Associate Professor Gregory Phillips, PhD. The workshop will also be attended by a range of health experts from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Dr Joanna Flynn and Michael Gorton will be attending the workshop in their roles as Chairs within the scheme, along with representatives from National Boards and AHPRA.

'This is an important first step for the National Scheme to use its platform to commit to practical and measurable actions that create meaningful opportunities for Indigenous Australians', says Renee Owen, Presiding Member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board.

The Board looks forward to contributing to this work and we will update you as progress continues.

Snapshot of the profession

The Board collects and analyses data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner registrations, and publishes quarterly updates on its [website](#).

The latest data update was published in November and covers the period July-September 2016. The table below shows that there are 606 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in Australia, an increase of 36 practitioners since March this year.

Registration type by principal place of practice (at September 2016)

	Registration Type		State Total
	General	Non-practising	
ACT	4	0	4
NSW	113	0	113
NT	211	1	212
QLD	105	0	105
SA	54	0	54
TAS	3	0	3
VIC	11	0	11
WA	103	1	104
No PPP	0	0	0
Total	604	2	606

The majority of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners are in the Northern Territory, with 212 registrants (34.98%) nominating the NT as their principal place of practice (PPP).

New South Wales hosts the second largest registrant base for this profession with 113 practitioners (18.65%). This is followed by Queensland (105 or 17.33%), Western Australia (104 or 17.16%), and South Australia (54 or 8.91%).

2015/16 annual report now published – our workforce has grown by more than 50%

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner workforce grew by more than 50% over the past year, making it the fastest growing profession of all the regulated health professions, according to data released in the 2015/16 annual report published by AHPRA.

The AHPRA and National Boards' annual report covering the financial year to 30 June 2016 was tabled in parliament on Friday 11 November.

The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the National Boards, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia, in implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). It also includes Board-specific data and highlights a multi-profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

Insights from the year include:

More practitioners: There were almost 20,000 more registrants in 2015/16 than there were last year, totalling 657,621 health practitioners across the 14 regulated health professions. Student registrations increased by more than 11,000 registrants year-on-year, to 153,710.

Growth in notifications: There were 10,082 notifications received during the year, an increase of 19.7% nationally (representing 1.5% of the registration base). The top three notifier complaints related to clinical care (41.8%), medication issues (11.5%) and health impairment (10.7%). This may be attributed to greater awareness of the National Scheme, due to a nationwide campaign aimed at employers, practitioners and the general public.

Improved monitoring and compliance to ensure public safety: 2,532 practitioners were being monitored for health, performance and/or conduct in 2015/16. A National Restrictions Library was launched, which currently contains 73 restrictions (conditions and undertakings) to improve national consistency.

Further highlights are included in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board [news item](#).

To view the 2015/16 annual report in full, along with supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance, see www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016/.

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Expanded, profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

Call for applications to the Accreditation Committee: assessors needed!

The Board's Accreditation Committee is seeking applications from suitably qualified and/or experienced individuals from across Australia who are interested in being included on a list of approved assessors. The Accreditation Committee draws on this list to appoint members of accreditation assessment teams.

The Accreditation Committee establishes accreditation assessment teams to assess registered training organisations

(RTOs) and their delivery of the Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice (Certificate IV Qualification). The assessment is made against approved accreditation standards according to the processes outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice accreditation process.

Each Assessment Team will generally comprise two assessors being:

- an assessor who is a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner, or an Aboriginal Health Worker, who has a sound knowledge of clinical practice and experience in clinical education, or, where this is not possible,
- an assessor that has current experience in delivery of the HLT 40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice qualification and sound knowledge of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care practice and experience in clinical education/workplace training – this person is not required to be a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner or Aboriginal Health Worker, and
- an assessor who has a sound knowledge of education and experience in teaching and learning – this person is not required to be a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

The term of appointment of each assessor appointed to the list is three years. Each assessor must satisfactorily complete retraining before being eligible for reappointment at the end of each three-year term.

More information about the roles, eligibility requirements and the application process can be found in the [call for applications](#) on the Board's website, along with an information guide and application form.

The Accreditation Committee is keen to appoint assessors before the next round of assessor training scheduled for early 2017. If you are interested, please apply now!

Diabetes Pathway Survey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers and health practitioners

The Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) has a new initiative that may be of interest to registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Please have a look at the details below. The survey can be claimed as CPD if relevant to your chosen scope of practice.

The ADEA is aiming to help improve the access to and quality of diabetes education for Indigenous Australians. To do this the ADEA is developing a pathway to help determine the needs of the established health workforce in Indigenous communities, and to set the standards for the health workforce in Indigenous communities to deliver quality, evidence-based diabetes education.

This initiative is welcomed and supported by the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) and Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA). A collaborative approach has been taken in developing the pathway for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce in diabetes education and management.

A Project Advisory Group has been established and the overall aim is for members to provide critical advice to ensure a culturally appropriate pathway is developed to enhance skills in diabetes education. Members of the Advisory Group reflect skills and expertise from various Indigenous educational or clinical settings.

Your answers to these questions will help the working party to determine an appropriate pathway, qualification and ultimately help to guide the professional recognition of health workers and health practitioners in the management and care of people with diabetes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is vital in the work of the Advisory Group and we urge you to participate.

You can find the survey on the ADEA [website](#).

Keep in touch with the Board

Call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 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.

The Board's [website](#) has information on [registration forms](#), [registration standards](#), [codes and guidelines](#), and [news](#). If you have already lodged your application, you may call the registration officer responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner applications directly on 08 8901 8527.

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