

## Communiqué

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### December 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 12 December, the fourth and final 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.

#### Board meeting in Melbourne

The Board met with key contacts on the evening before the meeting, including its Accreditation committee and NATSIHWA. 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.

#### Professional Capabilities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice profession

A large piece of work was finalised at this meeting: the approval of the Professional Capabilities document that underpins the Board's accreditation standards and describe the threshold level of professional capability required for general registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner. The document identifies the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner.

The revised accreditation standards (2019 accreditation standards) that come into effect in 2020 (see [May 2019 Communiqué](#)) require education providers to design and implement a program where learning outcomes and assessment tasks map to all the professional capabilities in the Professional Capabilities document.

The Professional Capabilities can be used by the Board as a reference point of threshold capability when exercising its statutory functions for:

- registration of individuals who completed an approved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice program of study
- re-registration of individuals who were previously registered as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, and
- evaluation of a registrant whose level of competence to practise may pose a risk of harm to the public, for example if the Board receives a complaint about that registrant.

The Professional Capabilities can be used:

- by education providers for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice curricula (learning and assessment), and
- to communicate to the public, consumers, employers, insurance companies and other stakeholders the standards that they can expect from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the review and provided helpful and constructive feedback to improve the clarity of the consultation documents.

### **Brochures and a video**

The Board reviewed its work this year to finalise two brochures and a video.

The brochures cover:

- [Why should I become an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner?](#)
- [Why should I employ an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners?](#)

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

After the final touches are put on the video, this will be uploaded to our [website](#).

### **Visit to Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Fitzroy**

The Board visited the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) in Fitzroy, Melbourne the day before its December Board meeting. The members were very pleased to be able to meet some of the staff, talk about the good work done at VAHS and take a tour of the complex in Fitzroy, one of 4 campuses, seeing some of the staff and patients at work.

VAHS was established in 1973 to address the specific medical needs of Victorian Indigenous communities. The organisation has expanded steadily over past 40 years to provide a comprehensive range of medical, dental and social services for their community.

As well as providing a variety of medical services, VAHS is committed to supporting the well-being of the community through contributions to community events and activities. VAHS is also committed to assisting research into the ongoing needs of the community.

The Board sincerely thanks Kaye Phillips, Sue Hedges and Jenny Hunt for taking the time to show us around and learn from each other.



Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board meet with staff at VAHS.

### **Clinical advisor needed**

The Board is currently advertising for a clinical advisor position for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice. The link is below:

<https://careers.ahpra.gov.au/cw/en/job/493695/clinical-advisor-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-practice>

Applications are sought from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners. Please get in touch with us if you are interested in this work.

### **Registration renewal reminder**

A reminder to practitioners who did not renew their registration by 30 November 2019 that they are now in the late renewal period and had until 31 December to apply. Practitioners who apply after 1 January must lodge a new application for registration.

Anyone who hasn't applied to renew their registration by 31 December 2019 will have lapsed registration. They will be removed from the [national online register](#) and they will not be able to practise. A 'fast-track' application can be made, but only in January 2020, and the practitioner cannot practise until it is processed and the national register is updated, which can take time.

Practitioners who apply to renew during the late renewal period can still practise even if:

- we are still processing their application to renew, and/or
- the registration expiry date displayed on the register has passed.

Call Ahpra on 1300 419 495 or 08 8901 8562 if you have any questions or need help renewing your registration.

### **Social research results help to inform our work**



The Board noted the release of results from a social research project aimed at helping Ahpra and National Boards understand perceptions about us and our work. The aim of the project was to better understand what the community, regulated health professions, and our stakeholders think and feel about us, particularly in areas of understanding, confidence and trust. The social research project included a short anonymous survey to a random sample of registered practitioners and to a random sample of the broader community.

Our aim is that these insights will inform continued improvements across all areas of our work. The results have given us a baseline to build on and inform how we follow the [regulatory principles](#) that underpin our work as a risk-based regulator. We have surveyed practitioners and the community again in 2019 and these survey results will be released in 2020.

### **Cultural safety definition announcement soon**

In July 2018, Ahpra released the [Statement of Intent](#) publishing a [joint commitment](#) with the 15 National Boards, accreditation authorities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector leaders and organisations to make patient safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the norm.

The Statement of Intent recognises that cultural safety is patient safety and that cultural safety must be defined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. A strategic priority of the Statement of Intent is to help embed cultural safety into the health system through consistent regulation with over 740,000 registered health practitioners across Australia.

Last April, Ahpra, National Boards and accreditation authorities partnered with the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group](#) and the National Health Leadership Forum to conduct a public consultation for feedback on a proposed definition of 'cultural safety'. The final definition is now finalised and endorsed as the minimum baseline cultural safety definition for consistency across all functions of the National Scheme. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group have announced the final definition and have released a [communiqué about the definition of cultural safety and how it will be used across the National Scheme](#).

### **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, 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. In fact, the Professional Capabilities document described above, will be a great resource for employers, practitioners and Indigenous communities when it is published on the Board's website in the new year.

### **Need more information?**

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

### **National Scheme news**

#### **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](http://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](mailto:jill.humphreys@ahpra.gov.au).

### Compliments of the season

On behalf of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia, I extend best wishes and compliments of the season to all practitioners and our stakeholders.

Renee Owen

### Chair

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

18 December 2019