

Communiqué

February 2014 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 meets every two months and its last bimonthly meeting was held on 26 February 2014. A stakeholder forum on registration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners was held the day before the Board meeting.

Future Board meetings for the 2013/14 financial year will be held on 23 April 2014 in Perth and 25 June 2014 in Melbourne.

News

[A forum on registration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners – Brisbane](#)

On 26 February, the Board held a stakeholder forum at the Hotel Sofitel in Brisbane to promote registration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Over 70 health workers, employers, government officials and peak bodies attended the forum to listen to the Board Chair's presentation on registration, meet Board members and AHPRA staff and ask questions.

There will be a video of the forum presentation, as well as questions and answers uploaded in the [news section of the Board's website](#) for you to view.

There were several questions asked about the registration processes (for new applicants and renewing registrants), accreditation status of registered training providers, getting Medicare provider numbers, and the scope of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on [registration](#) and [accreditation](#) are available on the Board's website.

Future stakeholder forums for the 2013/14 financial year will be held on 23 April 2014 in Perth and 25 June 2014 in Melbourne. Go to the [news section of the Board's website](#) for updated details.

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

Board decisions

Accreditation of programs of study

Accreditation guidance material and application forms are now available for participating registered training providers. Accreditation assessors, who will conduct onsite assessments of programs of study, have been recruited and trained.

The approved accreditation standards have been published in the [accreditation section](#) of the Board's website. You can receive updates from the Accreditation Committee by completing the [online form](#).

Board's 2013/14 Strategic statement and work plan

The Board received a status report on progress towards achieving the outcomes and targets in its current Strategic Statement and Work Plan. While most targets had either been met or were ongoing, the outstanding targets were dependent on formal feedback from key stakeholders. To facilitate this, the Board considered a draft stakeholder survey, which will soon be finalised and promoted to stakeholders as an opportunity to provide formal feedback.

Proposed supervision guidelines

The Board is developing guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and their supervisors. When finalised, 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 on their registration from a health, performance or conduct matter that requires supervision, and/or
- have a condition related to inadequacies of qualifications on their registration.

The Board's draft supervision guidelines were sent out to a small group of key stakeholders as part of a preliminary consultation process. After assessing this preliminary feedback, the Board approved a revised version of its draft supervision guidelines for an eight week public consultation period commencing soon.

You will find full details of the Board's draft supervision guidelines in the [consultation section](#) of the Board's website. Your feedback will be appreciated.

Proposed capability statement and scope of practice

The Board considered feedback from various stakeholders about the need for a scope of practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, as well as contemporary, good practice models, which highlight the limitations of scopes of practice in the context of health workforce reform. On balance, the Board agreed to support upcoming roundtable discussions with key stakeholders about the development of a scope of practice, where the Board will promote the capabilities of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, as an important input to the development of a scope of practice.

Future forums on registration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners

The Board discussed where to hold stakeholder forums for the 2014/15 financial year. Given the success of these forums in 2013/14, the Board is considering holding forums in the same cities plus other centres of current and potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, such as Darwin and some regional centres.

Registration

Current registration figures

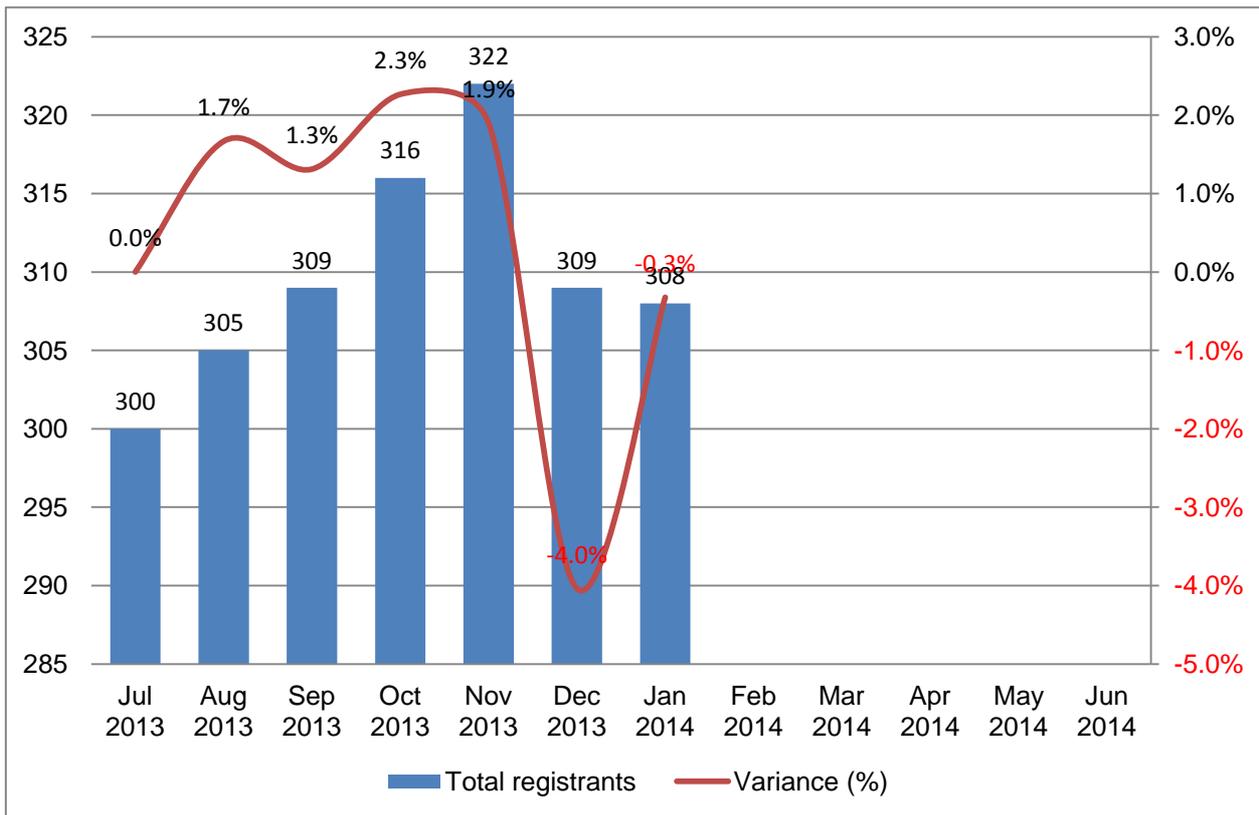
The Board collects and analyses data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner registrations. The Board shares the data and analyses each quarter on its [website](#).

The data provided is:

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

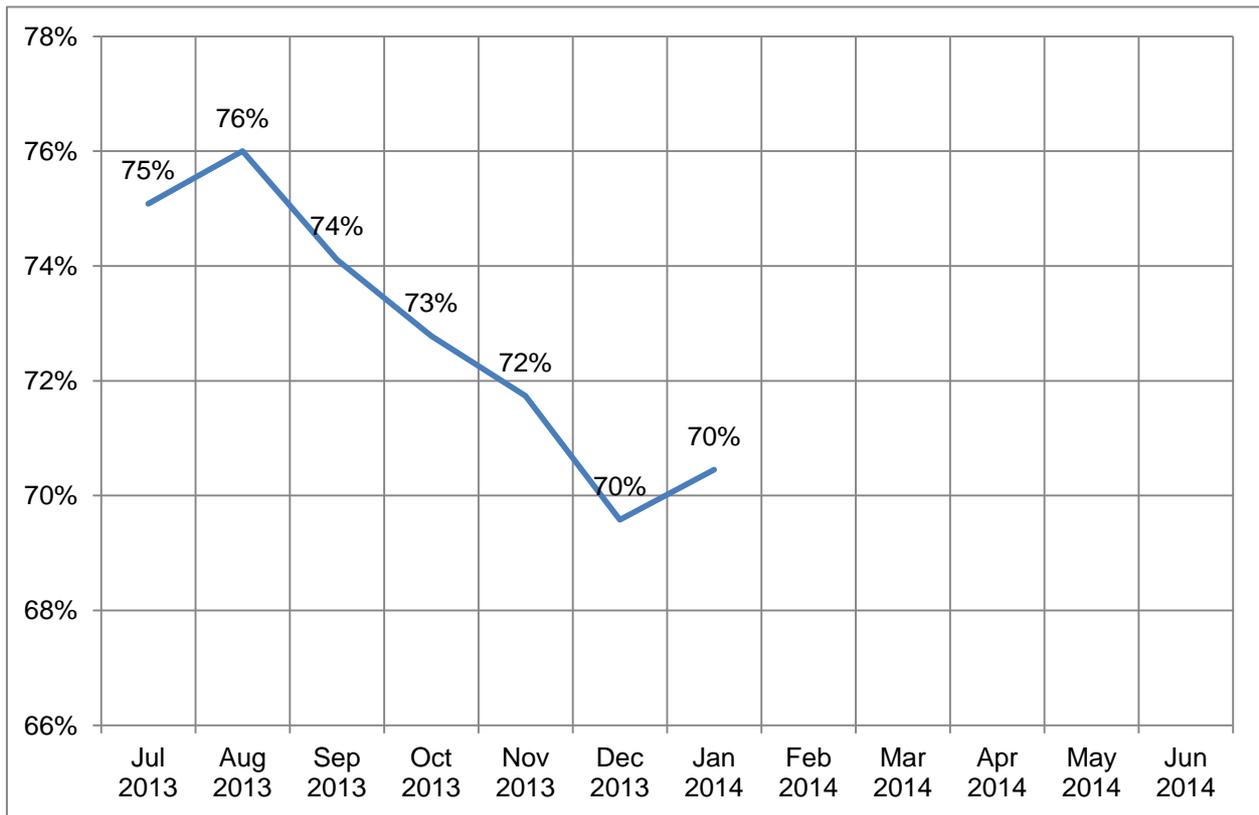
In addition to the above statistics, this *Communiqué* provides stakeholders with an overview of specific data over a period of time.

The table below shows that by the end of January 2014 there were 308 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in Australia. This is a 0.3% decrease from the previous month.

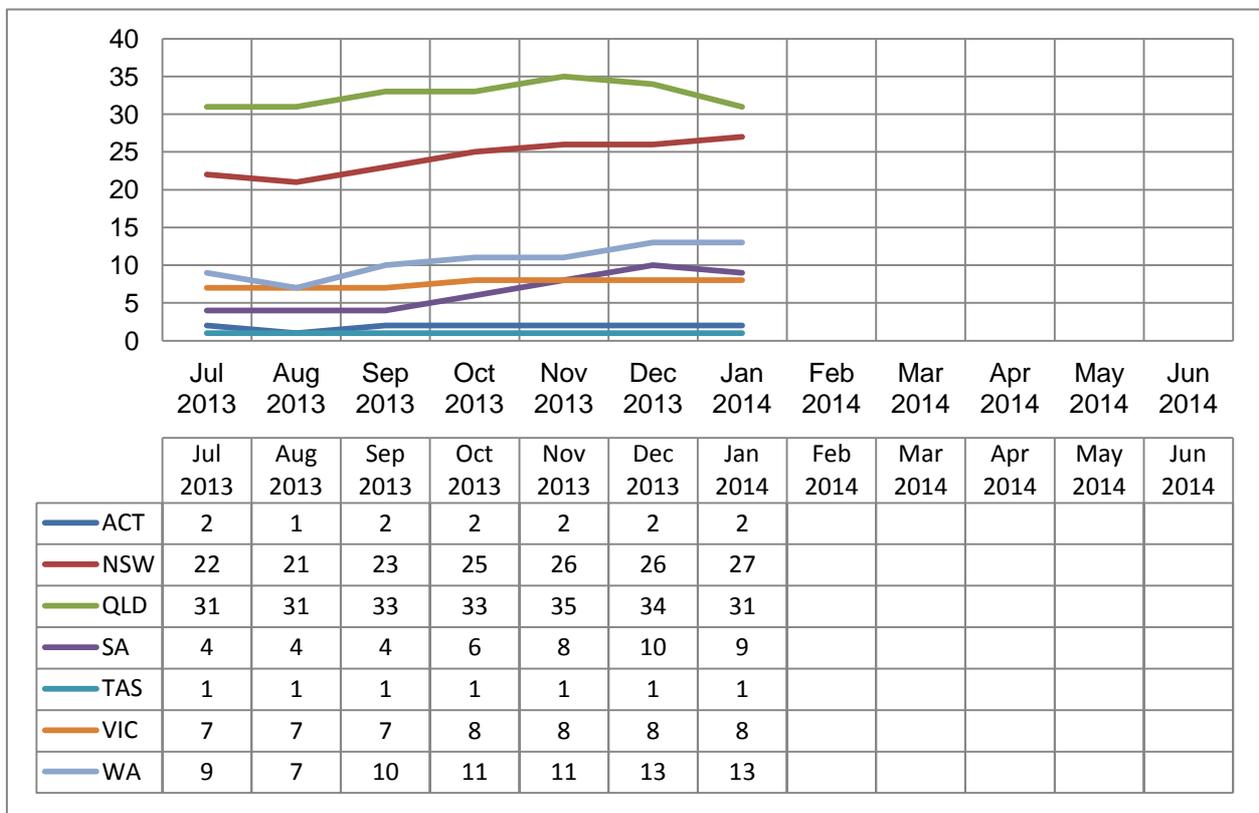


The overwhelming majority of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners are in the Northern Territory, with 217 registrants nominating the NT as their principal place of practice (PPP). This represents 70% of the profession. This is the same proportion as the previous month.

As the number of the registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners grows in other states and territories, the NT's proportion of this profession gradually declines, as illustrated in the graph below.



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 10%. This is followed by New South Wales (9%), Western Australia (4%), South Australia and Victoria (3% each).



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.

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.

Employers should consider whether the primary health care delivered by an unregistered health practitioner may place the safety of the public at risk. Employing a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner provides assurance that the individual is suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner.

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.

What if my qualification has not yet been accredited by the Board?

A frequently asked question from registration applicants is, "Can I still apply for registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner even though my qualification has not yet been accredited by the Board?" The answer is "Yes".

The Board recognises that the time it has taken to fully establish its accreditation function has meant that many applicants for registration have presented with qualifications received from not-yet-accredited programs of study, including those organisations still teaching out the superseded qualification, i.e. the [HLT43907 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care \(Practice\)](#).

In anticipation of the delays in programs of study receiving Board accreditation, the Board has structured its [registration standards](#) so that applicants with the superseded qualification and the new qualification can still qualify for general registration, even if the program they completed was not yet Board accredited. These applicants are eligible for general registration without any conditions. The only difference in the registration that graduates of non-Board accredited programs receive as opposed to those who have completed a Board approved/accredited program, is that a [notation](#) is included in the information which is placed on the [register](#). This notation reads as follows:

*Does not hold a qualification from a Board accredited education provider in the unit
"Work with medicines".*

This decision to apply a standard notation on the register was made in recognition of the considerable variation in the contents and manner in which the [HLTAHW020 - Administer medications](#) unit is currently taught by different RTOs throughout Australia. The notation is quite narrow in its focus and deliberately does not refer to the qualification as a whole. A notation does not restrict the registrant's practise in any way, but simply provides relevant information to the public and the registrant's employer, which will hopefully manage the risks around employers assuming that the practitioner has had the opportunity to develop all the competencies required for safely supplying and administering medications.

How can I remove the, “Does not hold a qualification from a Board accredited education provider” notation?

To remove this notation you can present a submission about your competencies in medication administration to the Board’s Registration and Notification Committee at anytime. The Committee will consider a variety of evidence including, supervision reports focusing in detail on your demonstrated competence with medicines and completion of upskilling or other training programs specific to medicines.

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 from the practitioner’s registration and no longer published on the register.

Conditions can include, for example, 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 their practice
- manage their practice in a specified way
- report to a specified person at specified times about their 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.

Peter PangQuee

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

27 March 2014