

Communiqué

October 2012 meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

Introduction

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board works in partnership with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to implement the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The functions of the Board include:

- developing the national standards, codes and guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice
- approving accreditation standards and accredited courses of study
- registering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and students, and
- handling notifications, complaints, investigations and disciplinary hearings nationally¹.

Members of the inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia were appointed in July 2011 for three years by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. Members' details can be found at www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au/About/board-members.aspx.

Registration

By the end of September there were 276 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners throughout Australia. This was the same number of registered practitioners as the previous month.

The number of registered health practitioners by state and territory is as follows:

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
2	5	253	8	2	1	3	2	276

At the Board's Registration and Notification Committee meeting on 18 October 2012, a further eight registrations were granted. The number of newly registered health practitioners by state and territory is as follows:

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	Total
-	-	1	5	-	-	1	1	8

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.aspx.

¹ Except in NSW, which has a co-regulatory system where complaint/notifications are handled by the Health Care Complaints Commission.

Registration renewals

Registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners are reminded that their registration is due for renewal **by 30 November**.

In recognition that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners have limited internet access, AHPRA has mailed renewal forms to practitioners to enable them to renew their registration. Under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) health practitioners are responsible for renewing their registration on time.

Under the National Law, those practitioners who are required to be registered under the National Scheme who do not renew registration within one month of their registration expiry date must be removed from the National Register of Practitioners. At this time, their registration will lapse and they will not be able to practise their profession in Australia until a new application is approved.

Neither the Board nor AHPRA have any discretion about this as it is part of the National Law.

For more information:

- Visit www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au for FAQs on renewal.
- Practitioners can check their registration details and expiry date on the Register of Practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au.
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia).

Other Board activities

Board's strategic statement 2012-14

After its annual planning day on 17 October, the Board is now drafting its 2012-14 strategic statement and work plan, which will align with the National Scheme's Strategy 2011-2014 (which can be viewed at www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/NRAS-Strategy-2011-2014.aspx).

Accreditation

Accreditation Committee membership is almost finalised. The Board still requires another Practitioner Member and work is being done to fill to this vacancy.

Board membership

The Board is working closely with stakeholders to fill the Board vacancy for a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners from Queensland.

Stakeholder engagement

The Board Chairperson, Peter Pangquee, presented an update on the national registration and accreditation scheme to the bi-annual face-to-face meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Registered Training Organisation National Network (ATSIHRTONN) on 17 October in Melbourne.

The Board is represented on other Health Workforce Australia (HWA) funded projects, include:

- the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Multimedia Resource Package
- Review of the Health Training Package, in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care qualifications

Projects

HWA has funded AHPRA on behalf of the Board to undertake a two-phase project on: (1) Registration Qualification Benchmarking, and (2) Safety Risk Assessment.

The first phase of this project is completed. The second phase, which is in progress, will involve assessing whether the public is at risk if Aboriginal Health Workers practicing in certain roles are not registered. The Board is finalising a discussion paper on this question as part of its public consultation process.

General matters

Annual Report

AHPRA and the National Boards submitted the 2012 Annual Report to Ministers by 30 September as required by the National Law. The report, expected to be publicly released on 1 November, details the work of the National Boards and AHPRA in implementing the second year of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The release will be supported by the publication of a special edition of AHPRA Report. The 2012 Annual Report and AHPRA Report will both be published online.

Review of standards, guidelines and codes

National Boards that have been in the National Scheme since 2010 have begun preparations for reviewing the registration standards, guidelines and codes that were developed before the scheme commenced.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia and the other National Boards that joined the National Scheme in 2012 will also be participating in the public consultations on common registration standards, codes and guidelines.

Practitioners, members of the public and other stakeholders will be able to provide feedback during the public consultation phases of the reviews. Where registration standards, guidelines and codes are common to all, or most, of the National Boards, the consultation phase will be coordinated across National Boards to make providing feedback easier.

Consultation is expected to occur over several stages, starting in 2013. The consultations are being staged (rather than happening simultaneously) to give stakeholders a better opportunity to provide feedback. Information about the reviews will be included in forthcoming communiqués and on the website as they commence.

Work on the reviews will include public consultation on a proposed social media policy. Until then, the Board's *Code of conduct* and *Guidelines for advertising of regulated health services* provide guidance about appropriate use of social media and online behaviour.

Board meetings for 2012

The Board has confirmed its meeting schedule for the remainder of 2012 as 15 November and 12 December.

Further information about national registration and the registration requirements of the Board, including a series of frequently asked questions, is available on the Board's website www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au.

Peter Pangquee

Chair

30 October 2012