

Communiqué

June 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's last meeting was held on 25 June 2014 at the AHPRA National office in Melbourne.

Board meetings for the 2014/15 financial year will be held quarterly in the months of August 2014, November 2014, February 2015 and May 2015 in Melbourne.

News

[Public consultation on Draft Supervision Guidelines](#)

The Board recently completed a public consultation process on its proposed Supervision Guidelines. All interested individuals and organisations were invited to comment on the consultation paper, including the questions in the paper by 16 June 2014.

Board decisions

[Financial performance, 2013/14](#)

The Board is forecast to end the 2013/14 financial year with a better surplus than originally budgeted, after reducing much of its recent meeting costs. These cost reductions have been achieved even though the Board ran a successful series of stakeholder forums held in Adelaide (23 October 2013), Sydney (18 December 2013), Brisbane (26 February 2014), and Perth (23 April 2014). A stakeholder forum in Melbourne is scheduled for 28 August 2014.

[Budget for 2014/15 approved](#)

At its June 2014 meeting, the Board approved its 2014/15 budget, which includes further reductions to its meeting costs. The move to the quarterly meeting format for the 2014/15 financial year is estimated to reduce the cost of sitting fees by 38 per cent and travel/accommodation costs by 7 per cent.

[Draft Health Profession Agreement](#)

The Board considered the first draft Health Profession Agreement with AHPRA and provided some feedback. Based on this feedback, an updated draft of the agreement will be considered at the Board's next meeting.

[Accreditation Committee update](#)

The Chair of the Board's Accreditation Committee and AHPRA's Accreditation Unit Program Manager delivered a presentation to the Board on the proposed Accreditation Committee work plan for 2014/15, previously submitted to the Board's 23 April 2014 meeting.

Practitioner audit update – criminal history check

The Board received an update on its audit of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners' declaration on their criminal history during the registration renewal process.

Discussion on the proportion of simulation in mandatory work placements

The Board discussed the findings published in an external report on the current level of simulated learning used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care training. The Board is in the early stages of discussing what the evidence suggests about this important aspect of training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners.

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 May 2014 there were 330 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in Australia.

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
2	31	223	35	11	1	8	19

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 68% of the profession.

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 in the previous month, Queensland hosts the second largest registrant base for this profession, with 11%. This is followed by New South Wales (9%), Western Australia (6%) and South Australia (3%).

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, and
- 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 (which includes clinical practices) 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 program of study 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 program of study 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](#). (Please note: a notation is not a condition.)

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

28 July 2014