

Communiqué

November 2015 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 most recent quarterly meeting was held on 25 November 2015 at the AHPRA national office in Melbourne. The next quarterly meeting will be held in Melbourne in February 2016. The whole Board meets as the Registration and Notification Committee (RNC) almost monthly to consider registration and notification (complaint) matters.

We publish this communiqué on our website. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

End of grandparenting provisions

The Board continues to highlight that from 30 June 2015, the arrangements that allowed some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals to become registered as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners expired.

Some of the applications for registration received before the 30 June deadline for the end of grandparenting are still being considered by the Board. If you lodged your application for registration before 30 June, you may call the AHPRA registration officer responsible for applications made under the grandparenting provisions on (08) 8901 8527.

Individuals applying for registration after 30 June 2015 must have successfully completed a qualification from an approved program of study. These programs of study are published on the Board's [website](#). More programs of study are being included as they are approved by the Board.

If you graduate with a qualification from a program of study that is not on the Approved program of study list, there is a risk that you will not be able to be registered.

Standards compliance audit

All health practitioners registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), are required to comply with a range of registration standards. These standards were developed after wide-ranging consultation and have been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council). Please refer to the Board's [registration standards](#) page for additional information and resources.

Last year the Board participated in an audit of registration standard compliance. In the coming months, AHPRA will again randomly select Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners to audit their compliance with the Board's registration standards.

An information pack will be sent to those selected for audit. Additional information is available on the [Board's website](#).

Annual planning

The Board recently held its annual planning session with members. As well as reflecting on the Board's work over the past year the session allowed us to plan for work to take place over coming years.

The regulatory work plan that we review on an annual basis is provided in summary form in the annual health professions agreement (HPA). The 2015/16 HPA has recently been [published](#) on the Board's website. The HPA sets out the partnership between the Board and AHPRA, and the services AHPRA will provide in supporting us to carry out our functions.

In our planning we work closely with AHPRA and the other National Boards to ensure that the work we need to do as regulators of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice profession can be achieved. We also consider if it is work that can be done in collaboration with other National Boards to support consistency and collaboration in regulatory policy across the professions.

Have you renewed your registration yet?

Registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners have until 30 November each year to renew their registration to avoid dropping off the register and no longer being able to practice.

AHPRA, on behalf of the Board, has sent a series of email and hard copy reminders about this to practitioners. If you are a registered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health practitioner and you have not received a reminder to renew your registration, you should phone AHPRA immediately on 1300 419 495.

If your application for renewal is received on time, or during the following one month late period, you can continue practising while your application is processed.

If you do not apply to renew your registration by 31 December 2015 your registration will lapse. This will mean that your name will be removed from the [Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners](#) and you will not be able to practise your profession in Australia.

National drug screening protocol now in effect

AHPRA and the National Boards have published information on a national drug screening protocol that is in effect from November 2015.

This will mean that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners who have restrictions placed on their registration by the Board as a result of past substance misuse will have routine quarterly hair testing, in addition to random urine testing.

The introduction of routine hair testing is based on expert advice about modern screening methods. Routine hair testing helps provide comprehensive information about the use – over time – of a wide range of drugs (not just based on the practitioner's drug taking history).

These restrictions are generally designed to keep the public safe while the practitioner remains in practice. The national protocol supports the monitoring of these practitioners to make sure they are complying with the restrictions.

The drug screening protocol is part of a wider, national strategy to effectively manage compliance and monitoring across the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. More information is in the statement published on the [Board's website](#).

2014/15 annual report has been published

The 2014/15 National Scheme annual report, including a report from the Board, has been published.

The report details the work of the National Boards and AHPRA in implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme over the 12 months to 30 June 2015.

The annual report is published at www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2015/. It includes a detailed report – including data – for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia. A media release about the report – with data across professions and jurisdictions – is published on the [AHPRA](#)

[website](#). A report, which presents the data specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, will be published on the Board's website before the end of the calendar year.

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 November 2015 there were 463 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in Australia.

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	TOTAL
4	74	219	68	22	3	9	62	1	463

The overwhelming majority of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners are in the Northern Territory, with 219 registrants nominating the NT as their principal place of practice (PPP).

New South Wales hosts the second largest registrant base for this profession with 74 practitioners. This is followed by Queensland (68), Western Australia (62) and South Australia (22).

Top tips for using the register

The [national register of practitioners](#) is core to all the work of the Board, as it provides up-to-date information about every registered health practitioner. To help the public and employers get the most out of the register, we have developed [these tips](#). In particular, the tips remind anyone responsible for recruiting health practitioners how to use the register to verify a practitioner's registration status.

Are your contact details up to date?

AHPRA will be sending out the first round of renewal reminder notices next month. It is important that your contact details are up to date.

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.

Security tip – keep your web browser updated

AHPRA and the National Boards have made changes to our websites to ensure your information is kept safe.

If you use Internet Explorer version 6 (or an older version) to view the Board's website and are experiencing difficulty accessing web pages and online services, the Board recommends you [upgrade to the newest version of Internet Explorer immediately](#). It is available for free from Microsoft.

If you are using a new version of Internet Explorer and are still having difficulty accessing our website please contact us to report your experience. Call **1300 419 495** Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

Follow @AHPRA on Twitter

AHPRA uses [Twitter](#) to encourage greater discussion about National Board consultations and to host regular Twitter chats on important topics.

Conclusion

We publish a range of information about registration and our expectations of registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners on our website at www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more information or help with questions about your registration please send a web enquiry form or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

From 1 February 2016 I will be handing over the baton of Presiding Member to Lisa Penrith, a practitioner member from NSW.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to wish you a happy and safe festive season and all the best for 2016.

Bruce Davis

Presiding Member

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

4 December 2015