

Communiqué

February 2016 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 24 February 2016 at the AHPRA national office in Melbourne. The next quarterly meeting will be held in Darwin in May. 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.

Review of registration standards

The Board will review its registration standards in 2016 in conjunction with the other National Boards that started under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) in 2012. The registration standards that are being reviewed are:

- professional indemnity insurance arrangements (PII)
- continuing professional development (CPD)
- recency of practice (RoP)
- English language skills, and
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander registration standard.

The Board will send consultation papers to its stakeholders in the coming weeks. They will also be published on the Board's website (www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au).

The Board is keen to get your feedback on the proposed draft changes to the registration standards (some changes are small, some are major).

In the meantime, the currently published registration standards are in force.

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](#).

National awareness campaign

You may have seen the beginning of the AHPRA national awareness campaign. **Know your obligations**, the first of three phases, directed at employers of health practitioners, launched at the close of last year. The message has been shared over social media through targeted ads resulting in a doubling of our online community.

The next phase of the campaign is targeted at practitioners. Under the headline of **The not-so-small print**, practitioners are encouraged to stay up to date with regulation changes as they occur, and to be aware of their obligations as registered practitioners. Advertisements will be rolled out later this month across a mix of social media, industry publications and newsletters.

The final phase will be directed at the public to increase awareness of the national register of practitioners.

Health practitioner regulation: Learn how you're protected

A new video and an accompanying infographic explaining the Australia-wide scheme that is in place to protect members of the public was released by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in December.

Both resources are available on the [What we do](#) page of the AHPRA website or read the [news item](#) on the Board website for more information. The video can also be watched on AHPRA's [YouTube channel](#).

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 Scheme over the 12 months to 30 June 2015.

The annual report is published at www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2015/. A media release about the report – with data across professions and jurisdictions – is published on the [AHPRA website](#).

Profession profile

The Board will publish in late March a report of its work in the regulation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners under the National Scheme during 2014/15. The report provides a profession-specific view of the Board's work to manage risk to the public. The data in this report are drawn from data generated in the [2014/15 year of the National Scheme](#).

Local data summaries from National Scheme

The National Boards and AHPRA have published [reports for each state and territory](#) on the National Scheme. They are for the 2014/15 year of the scheme. The summaries provide local data on registration types, notifications (complaints) and mandatory notifications for the regulated health professions, for each state and territory.

Employer obligations

If you employ registered health practitioners, you have an important obligation to ensure that they hold current registration and that you understand your mandatory notification requirements under the National Law.

AHPRA has published [resources](#) to help you understand and meet your obligations, which are designed to complement your recruitment requirements and processes. These materials state exactly what your obligations are and it is important that you are familiar with them.

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 Scheme. More information is in the statement published on the [Board’s website](#).

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 December 2015 there were 558 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in Australia.

ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	TOTAL
5	91	219	72	27	3	9	71	1	558

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 91 practitioners. This is followed by Queensland (72), Western Australia (71) and South Australia (27).

Since our last communiqué which reported on numbers at the end of November 2015, there has been an increase of 95 registered Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander practitioners in Australia.

Approved programs of study

At the end of June 2015, the grandparenting provisions of the National Law expired. Importantly, that means that unless you were previously registered under another law, in order to register now, you must hold a qualification from an Approved program of study. There are currently five programs of study that have been approved by the Board. More are coming on line as they are accredited and approved by the Board. The list of [Approved programs of study](#) is published on the Board’s website.

If you have any questions, please call the Board’s Executive Officer, Jill Humphreys, on (03) 8708 9066.

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?

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.

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 to 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.

Lisa Penrith

Presiding Member

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

4 March 2016