

## Media release

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10 November 2016

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice is the fastest growing registered health profession in Australia

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce grew by more than 50% over the past year, making it the fastest growing profession of all the regulated health professions, according to data released today in the [2015/16 annual report](#) published by AHPRA.

The 2015/16 annual report by AHPRA and the national health practitioner boards is a comprehensive record of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2016.

In 2014/15, there were just 391 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner registrants, with 587 registrants reported as at 30 June 2016.

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners constitute a relatively small proportion of the almost 660,000 registrants currently in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, the increase solidifies the profession as the fastest growing among Australia's health-practice boards.

'The rise can largely be attributed to grandparenting provisions expiring on 30 June 2015, and the approval of more accredited programs of study,' said Ms Lisa Penrith, presiding member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia. 'When the provisions ended, the Board assessed a large influx of applications for registration and the Accreditation Committee has been very busy in their work accrediting programs of study.'

AHPRA is committed to developing and regulating the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner workforce and continues to advise people who missed the grandparenting deadline about how they can qualify for registration in the future. As at 30 June 2016, there were five approved programs that qualify graduates for general registration under the National Law.

'We want to make sure that anyone who wants to work in the field has access to approved programs of study,' said Ms Penrith. 'Developing and regulating an Indigenous health workforce is as an important step towards closing the gap on Indigenous health issues, such as child-mortality rates and the disparity between the life expectancy of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.'

#### More highlights of the past year include:

- **A simplified renewal process:** Online registration renewals reached a new high across all 14 registered health professions – with over 98% of all registrants renewing online and on time, making it easier for health practitioners to renew their registration each year.
- **Increased registration:** While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders made up less than 0.1% of all health practitioners registered across Australia, it is the fastest growing profession in the scheme. There was more than 50% growth year-on-year, from 391 to 587 registrants.
- **More students on the register:** As at 30 June 2016, there were 292 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner students, representing an increase of 108.6% on 2014/15.

- **Fewer notifications received about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners:** Just five notifications were received nationally about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. This represents a decrease of 28.6% from last year. During the year, nine matters were closed (0.2% of all matters closed across all professions).
- **No statutory offences by Indigenous registered health professionals.** There were no new complaints made this year relating to possible statutory offences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners.
- **No notifications resulted in the suspension or cancellation of registration of any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner:** 22.2% of notifications resulted in conditions being imposed or an undertaking being accepted by the board, 11.1% resulted in a reprimand or caution and 66.7% resulted in no further action being taken.
- **The development of a reconciliation action plan:** Planning began in 2015/16 to develop an action plan to guide the activities of all 14 regulated health professions and AHPRA in relation to closing the gap on Indigenous health issues.

The 2015/16 annual report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the Boards and highlights a multi profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

‘The regulation of over 660,000 registered health practitioners across 14 health professions and eight states and territories is an important task,’ said AHPRA CEO Mr Martin Fletcher. ‘There are many things to consider in regulation – but there is only one main focus, and that is patient safety.’

To view the 2015/16 annual report, along with supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance, see [www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016)

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

#### *For more information*

- Visit [www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016)
- For online enquiries visit [www.ahpra.gov.au/enquiry](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/enquiry)
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)
- For a list of approved programs of study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, visit the [AHPRA website](http://www.ahpra.gov.au)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200