

Contents

Message from the Presiding Member	1
Registration renewal reminder	2
Graduate applications are open online	2
Approved programs of study leading to registration	2
Review of registration standards – look out for this in 2018	3

Review of our Code of conduct	3
Annual report update: continued growth in the profession	3
National Scheme news	4
Update on the Independent Accreditation Systems Review	4
International research collaboration at seminar	4
Keep in touch with the Board	5

Message from the Presiding Member

Since our last newsletter, I am happy to report that a lot has been achieved by the Board, doing its part to contribute to the improvement of health outcomes for our communities across the country by registering only qualified and eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners (different from Aboriginal Health Workers). You can read about our work on registration standards, our *Code of conduct*, and the programs of study that we have recently approved, in this newsletter.

A highlight of the year is the work AHPRA and the 14 National Boards have been doing to develop the National Scheme-wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health strategy. Our Board is contributing to this important work and we have made great progress. Another workshop was held last month, to identify next steps. Part of the plan is to develop an approach to supporting greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on all of the National Boards, and looking at ways in which cultural safety capability can be developed within the National Scheme.

You can read about other highlights from this year in our feature on the annual report.

On a more personal note, Board members were fortunate to be able to visit Barangaroo in the heart of Sydney, when the Board met at the AHPRA NSW office for its November meeting. Clarence Slockee is the Aboriginal educator and head of visitor services at Barangaroo. Clarence kindly gave us a walking tour and explained the native history of Sydney Harbour and the importance of the land and its significance to the clans of the Eora Nation that once lived where Sydney now stands. Barangaroo is named after a powerful Cammeraygal woman who lived in the area at the time of early colonial settlement. She was a key figure in local Aboriginal culture and community, and remains so today.

Barangaroo Reserve is a six-hectare headland, planted with 75,000 endemic Australia trees and shrubs that are a feature of the reserve. It is located in the centre of Sydney, on the harbour, and it not only has recreated the headland as it was in pre-colonial times, there's a proximity of significant landmarks that tell a story of people and place that is specific to Barangaroo. All of this links to Barangaroo the woman and many other historically important Aboriginal people.

Barangaroo celebrates Aboriginal contemporary culture through artworks, events and commemorations, including NAIDOC Week. We would highly recommend a visit next time you're in Sydney and we thank Clarence for showing us around.



The Board at Barangaroo. From L to R: Lisa Penrith, Bruce Brown, Anita Phillips, Karrina DeMasi, Celia Harnas, Clarence Slockee (from Barangaroo), Jill Humphreys, Paul Shinkfield and Renee Owen.

Reminder – you have till 30 December to renew your registration

All registered health practitioners must renew their registration by 30 November each year. We are now in the late period and you have until 30 December to renew if you haven't already done so. There is no late fee for this profession.

After 30 December, your name drops off the register and you are no longer registered. It is a much more complicated process to re-register, and once your name is off the register you may no longer use the protected title of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner. So don't delay, if you haven't already renewed your registration! We need to keep our profession strong in numbers if we want to make a difference and improve our recognition through our important work as regulated health professionals.

On behalf of the Board, I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season and all the best for 2018. I look forward to updating you on the Board's progress next year.

Renee Owen

Presiding Member
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

Registration renewal reminder

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners who have yet to renew their registration are now in the late renewal period and have until 31 December to apply to renew. There is no late fee for this profession. Practitioners who apply after 1 January must lodge a new application for registration.

Anyone who does not apply to renew their registration by 31 December 2017 will have lapsed registration. They will be removed from the national [Register of practitioners](#), their registration will lapse and they will not be able to practise.

A 'fast-track' application can be made, but you cannot practise until it is processed and the national register is updated, which can take time.

If you apply to renew during the late renewal period you can still practise even if:

- we are still processing your application to renew, and/or
- the registration expiry date displayed on the register has passed.

Renewing your registration includes an extra step this year

When completing your renewal, you will be asked to check that your qualification(s) are recorded correctly on the online [national register of practitioners](#).

We are including this as part of online renewal to make it easy for you to confirm and update these details if required. You will be helping us to maintain the integrity of the national register, which helps to protect the public.

Useful information is on the [Registration renewal](#) page of the Board's website.

Graduate applications are open online

AHPRA is now calling for final-year students of approved programs of study to apply for registration online.

Those on the Student Register who will complete their [approved program of study](#) at the end of 2017 have been sent an email inviting them to [apply online](#) for registration four to six weeks before finishing their course.

Students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#). Graduates can start practising as soon as their name is published on the [national register](#).

Approved programs of study leading to registration

The Board has recently approved the following HLT40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice courses, and the course providers. These have been added to the list of [approved programs of study](#) that lead to registration:

- Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation at South Hedland
- Garnbirringu Health Service Incorporated in Kalgoorlie

Courses leading to registration must be approved by the Board and published on the Board's website. Only people holding one of these qualifications are able to apply for registration.

If you are someone who is not registered and would like to be but don't have one of these approved qualifications, one option is to approach one of the approved course providers and ask for recognition of any prior learning you might have. You might have to do some more study but with a qualification from an approved program of study, you can apply for registration with the Board.

Being registered gives you formal recognition as a member of a profession, and it ensures you have the right training to be a safe practitioner. It gives both the community and your employer a guarantee that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified are working within the community.

If you are someone with notations on your registration and want to find out how to have them removed, or for any other reason, please get in touch with the AHPRA NT office on 1300 419 495 or 08 8901 8527. You don't have to do clinical work in order to be registered as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner.

The Board's job is to register appropriately qualified people and to investigate complaints made against registered health practitioners, to make sure that our communities have safe health care. The Board can't make changes to Medicare rebate numbers or to how much people are paid and any industrial matters. However, the Board does continue to be well represented and speaks up to contribute to these broader issues, often through AHPRA, the administrative part of the National Law under which we're regulated.

Review of registration standards – look out for this in 2018

The review of the Board's registration standards (our rules for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners (HPs)), as mentioned to you in our last newsletter, has not yet been published for broad and wide-ranging consultation. This will happen in 2018. We really want to hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, Aboriginal Health Workers, AMSs and organisations, everybody - to tell us what you think of the changes we're making to some of the registration standards (rules):

- Continuing professional development (CPD): changing to require 20 hours of CPD - doesn't have to be endorsed or accredited. A big change.
- Recency of practice - one month a year or three months over three years. A big change.
- Professional indemnity insurance (PII) - very little change, just made clearer. Your employer will likely hold your PII.
- English language skills - made simpler.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice - made simpler.

The National Law, which governs what the Board can do, says that the Board must make rules on these topics. These rules become the registration standards that people who are registered must stick to, and the changes the Board is proposing are to refine the ones that are currently in force, particularly now that the grandparenting period (which allowed people to register using experience and other qualifications) has finished.

We will publish a consultation pack explaining all the proposed changes, with suggested questions. You don't have to answer the questions, and may pass on any comments to us. Please think about reading these revised documents and help us ensure that the things like the amount of CPD and recent practice that you have to do each year in order to remain registered is reasonable and can fit in with the way you work. Look for the consultation pack on our website early in 2018.

Review of our Code of conduct

A review of the Board's Code of conduct has also started. This important document puts into words what best practice looks like for 11 of the health professions that are regulated in the same way under the National Law. If someone makes a complaint about a registered health practitioner's health, conduct or performance, it is the *Code of conduct* (and the other registration standards) that they will be measured against in an investigation.

As a registered health practitioner, it is important that you are familiar with the code and work within it at all times, no matter what you're employed to do. Your workplace might also have a similar code or guidelines that you also have to follow, but sticking within the boundaries of the Board's *Code of conduct* is a legal requirement of registration. Helping us with feedback on the proposed changes will help ensure it is fit for purpose and doesn't ask too much of you, or too little.

Annual report update: continued growth in the profession

AHPRA and the National Boards released their annual report for 2016/17 in November. The annual report is a comprehensive record of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) for the 12 months to 30 June 2017.

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners constitute a small proportion of the 678,983 registrants currently in the National Scheme, the continued increase in registrants for the profession is an important step in supporting better health outcomes for Australia's first peoples.

Growth in the workforce indicates increasing awareness and appreciation of the value and importance of providing culturally appropriate healthcare to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As at 30 June 2017, there were 12 approved programs that qualify graduates for general registration under the National Law¹ (seven more than last year).

The task of accrediting education providers for our profession is sometimes challenging given that many of our approved programs are delivered where they are required – in remote and rural areas. Our priority is to develop and regulate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce to ensure safe, competent, qualified and culturally appropriate care of Indigenous patients.

A snapshot of the profession

Easy to renew: This year saw the largest online registration renewal rate ever achieved across all 14 registered health professions – with over 98.5% of all registrants renewing online and on time (91.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners renewed online).

Increased registration year on year: While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners made up less than 0.1% of all health practitioners registered nationally, the total registrant base exceeded 600 registered practitioners for the first time this year (from 587 last year to 608).

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

Growth trends consistent with increased awareness of the profession: It has been five years since the profession joined the National Scheme (on 1 July 2012) year on year:

- In 2012/13, there were 300 registrants
- In 2013/14, there were 343 registrants
- In 2014/15, there were 391 registrants
- In 2015/16, there were 587 registrants
- In 2016/17, there were 608 registrants

More students on the register: As at 30 June 2017, there were 448 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner students studying for the qualification that leads to registration, representing an increase of 53.4% on 2015/16.

Accreditation: There are currently 12 programs of study available to those who wish to qualify as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner (up from four in 2015/16).

Complaints received about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners: Seven notifications were received nationally about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, representing just 1.2% of the profession.

There were two mandatory notifications made; both were about standards of practice.

Of six matters closed, in 2016/17: one resulted in a caution or reprimand being made by the Board, two resulted in conditions being imposed on the practitioners' registration, and three resulted in no further action being taken.

Statutory offences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners: Three new complaints were made this year relating to possible statutory offences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners. Of these, two related to title protection. That is, only people who are registered with the Board are able to use the protected titles 'Aboriginal Health Practitioner', 'Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner'.

Active monitoring cases in 2016/17: 73 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners were monitored during the year. The vast majority (65) were monitored for suitability/eligibility for registration in the profession; three were monitored for performance and four for health.

To view the 2016/17 annual report, along with supplementary tables that segment data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance, visit the [Annual Report microsite](#).

In the coming weeks, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in each of the 14 registered health professions. Jurisdictional reports, which present data on registered health practitioners in each state and territory, will also be published.

National Scheme news

Update on the Independent Accreditation Systems Review

The accreditation functions of the National Law ensure that the qualifications people are able to use to apply for registration are fit for purpose and meet the Board's Accreditation standards. Only programs of study that are published on the Board's website can be used for registration purposes.

In October 2016 Australia's health ministers commissioned Professor Michael Woods, former Productivity Commissioner, to carry out the Independent Accreditation Systems Review (the Review). Following public consultations Professor Woods has prepared [draft recommendations](#) for ministers. Many of the reforms in his draft report would, in their current form, require significant changes to our legislation and how we manage the accreditation of courses leading to registration.

In response to the draft recommendations, AHPRA and National Boards have published a joint submission to the Review on the [AHPRA website](#). In summary we propose that a more effective and efficient approach would be to make changes to roles of AHPRA, National Boards and Accreditation Councils, rather than create new regulatory bodies with the likely cost and complexity this could create. We believe that this would deliver the changes required to support the professional health workforce required by Australia.

The joint submission includes additional responses from four participating National Boards – Chiropractic, Medical, Optometry and Psychology. The Pharmacy Board made a separate [submission](#) and has published this on its [website](#).

AHPRA and National Boards look forward to the Review's final report and health ministers' response in due course. A news item including a high-level summary of key aspects of the joint submission has been published on the [AHPRA website](#).

International research collaboration at seminar

AHPRA and the [Health and Care Professions Council \(HCPC\)](#), the United Kingdom's multi-professional health and social care regulator, met for a Research Seminar in November to target the issue of patient safety in practitioner regulation.

This was the largest research collaboration of its kind, with data for over one million registered health practitioners across both countries, providing a foundation for a stronger focus on how regulators of health practitioners can keep patients safer.

The joint research seminar looked at how AHPRA and National Boards learn from data to improve regulatory effectiveness, patient safety and professional standards internationally. Through engaging and collaborating with other regulators we can learn more and translate what we find into real action that puts patient safety first.

More than 148 people attended the seminar which showcased research updates in areas such as risk-based regulation to

prevent harm and using behavioural insights in regulation. In attendance were international researchers, regulators, accreditation authorities and practitioners, all looking at ways in which research can help shape AHPRA and HCPC's regulatory policies, decision-making and compliance activities.

For more information

Interviews with those who attended the seminar, including HCPC CEO Marc Seale and AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher, are on the AHPRA [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

Keep in touch with the Board

Call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 or 08 8901 8527 if you:

- have any questions
- need help filling in forms, or
- are having trouble explaining to your employer about requirements. You can ask your employer to call this number.

The [Board's website](#) has information on [registration forms](#), [registration standards, codes and guidelines](#), and [news](#). If you have already lodged your application, you may call the registration officer responsible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner applications directly on 08 8901 8527.

To contact the Board, please call Jill Humphreys on 03 8708 9066 or send an email to jill.humphreys@ahpra.gov.au.

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Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
ABN: 78 685 433 429