

Communiqué

December 2018 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 (National Scheme). Details about individual Board members can be found on the Board's [website](#).

The Board's most recent quarterly meeting was held in Sydney in December, the fourth meeting for 2018. The Board meets as the Registration and Notification Committee (RNC) in between these meetings to consider registration and notification (complaint) matters about individual practitioners. The Board then meets to consider policy and other matters.

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

Board meeting in Sydney

The Board was very pleased to invite the President of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Council of NSW, Christopher O'Brien and the Council's Executive Officer, Farina Bains, to observe the December Board meeting.

The NSW Councils (one for each regulated health profession) were established as part of the National Scheme to manage complaints about the health and conduct of health practitioners and students in NSW. AHPRA and the relevant National Board manages complaints about the health and conduct of regulated health practitioners and students in every other Australian state or territory.

The Board also conducted its annual strategic planning session during its December meeting, including discussing current strategic initiatives. The Board will continue to closely link its strategic initiatives with the broader [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy](#).

Review of registration standards

As has been previously highlighted in our communiqués and newsletters, the Board has been busy reviewing its core registration standards. The review process has been completed and the revised draft registrations standards are now at the approval stage. The scheduled review has brought the registration standards in line with the expiry of the Grandparenting provisions of the National Law^[1]. The registration standards that have been 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.

[1] Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law).

The Board was very grateful to have received so much thoughtful and considered feedback from a wide variety of individuals and entities. The public consultation period has now closed.

Issues of particular interest from stakeholders included the changes to the CPD registration standard, where it is proposed to simplify requirements to 20 hours of CPD per year which includes five hours of 'interactive' CPD.

As explained in the draft, revised registration standard, 'interactive' does not necessarily mean leaving home to attend a course. Some feedback received thought there may be an impact to service delivery if staff had to leave for periods of time to attend formal CPD events. Interactive CPD may be online, it may be conducted with other practitioners (not necessarily from the same profession) at work.

The main thing is that practitioners choose CPD that relates directly to the jobs they are employed to do – whether clinical, administrative or something different. The Board does not define your scope of practice. What you do as a registered practitioner is generally determined by what role you are employed to do.

Other feedback focussed on concerns about the removal of the (currently required) first aid certificate in the RoP registration standard. As the Board does not define scope of practice for registrants, it knows that not everyone works in a job where the first aid certificate is required. If it is, it is generally provided by the workplace/employer.

While it's good for everyone to have a current first aid certificate, the Board must be careful not to put an unintended barrier in place by establishing requirements that are not necessary for all.

The next step in the process for changing to the new registration standards is to send the draft revised registration standards to the Health Ministers, through the Ministerial Council, for their consideration for approval.

We'll keep you up to date on the timing of the changes.

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

Visit to the Aboriginal Medical Service Cooperative Redfern

Following the Board meeting in Sydney, the Board visited the Aboriginal Medical Service Cooperative (the Service) in Redfern. The members were generously welcomed and were impressed by the services provided to the community, all under the one roof.

The Service in Redfern, established in 1971, was the first Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in Australia. It provides culturally appropriate health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Central NSW. The services are predominantly delivered and managed by professional Aboriginal staff experienced with, and sensitive to, the needs of their community. The Services is a multi-functional (including specialist and dental services), not-for-profit organisational that delivers a broad range of services and community programs.



From left: Josh Roxburgh from the AMS, Renee Owen, Leanne Quirino, Margaret McCallum, Christopher O'Brien.

It is always great to see our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners in action in the many and varied roles they work in.

Our thanks are extended in particular to Josh Roxburgh, who gave his time so generously to show us around.

Fees set for 2018/19

The Board has recently announced the national registration fee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners for 2018/19.

The registration fee has been frozen at \$150. It will cover the registration period for most practitioners of 1 December 2018 to 30 November 2019. A [full fee](#) schedule, including the fee arrangements for practitioners whose principal place of practice is NSW, has been published on the Board's website.

The fee ensures that the Board has the funds required to carry out its duties and to protect the public.

Fees support the Board in the continual development of a safe and mobile Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner workforce for health practitioners and the public in the most efficient ways possible.

National Scheme news

Paramedics: Welcome to the National Scheme!

On Saturday 1 December 2018 the National Scheme reached a milestone with paramedicine becoming the sixteenth regulated health profession.

Reflecting on the milestone, Paramedicine Board of Australia Chair Associate Professor Stephen Gough ASM Gough noted that it was the culmination of many years of debate, deliberation and sustained effort by the paramedic profession to join a national regulatory scheme that has patient safety at its heart.

'While paramedics have always had the patient at the centre of everything they do – showing compassion, understanding and empathy to those they provide care – the past two decades have also seen the profession grow in complexity; paramedics are now working in a range of roles and environments, using sophisticated treatments and technology, to provide world-class services to Australian communities.

'Regulating paramedicine under the National Scheme acknowledges the critical role paramedics play in our health system and recognises paramedics as registered health professionals,' Associate Professor Gough said.

1 December 2018 also marks just over two years since the [COAG Health Council](#) announced its intention to regulate the paramedicine profession, with the inaugural National Board appointed in October 2017.

Over this time, stakeholders across the profession, including governments, jurisdictional ambulance services, and private and volunteer organisations, have worked together to make sure that all eligible paramedics are well prepared for regulation.

Since registration opened at the beginning of September 2018, over 17,000 paramedics have applied for registration.

Find out more about paramedicine on the [Paramedicine Board of Australia's website](#).

Do you practise under the name published on the online Register of practitioners?

Governments recently consulted on possible changes to the National Law, which would allow the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and National Boards to publish on the online [Register of practitioners](#), the names that registered health practitioners use in practice and not just their legal name.

The national online *Register of practitioners* is a vital part of Australia's system of regulating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners to support patient safety. Each registered health profession publishes registration information about practitioners on the online register. The public and employers can look up the names of all health practitioners who are registered to practise. The registers also provide important information about limits or restrictions placed on the way a registered health practitioner is allowed to practise.

The national online registers must remain an authoritative and trusted source of information about health practitioners. Consumers rely on them for accurate and up to date information to inform their healthcare decision-making and employers rely on them to validate their employees' registration status.

AHPRA and the Board know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners may practise the profession using a name that is different from their legally recognised name published on the register (an alias).

AHPRA has asked governments to consider changes to the National Law that would enable registered health practitioners to nominate one or more aliases to be recorded on the public register. Governments [recently consulted](#) on this, among a range of other possible amendments to the National Law.

AHPRA believes that recording additional names (or aliases) on the register will help to inform and protect the public, by making it easier to identify a practitioner who may be registered and able to practise but who is not using their legal name.

There are some operational and practical issues that will need to be considered if governments make this change. A clear definition of an 'alias' is required, so practitioners' reporting obligations to AHPRA and the Board are clear. AHPRA and National Boards will need to consider what information practitioners will need to provide about their use of aliases in practice and whether any verification of this will be necessary to protect the validity of the register. Finally, there may be risks of unintended consequences - including whether publishing aliases could be used for commercial gain or benefits that are not related to public information and protection, which is the focus of the National Law.

AHPRA and the Board will keep practitioners and the public informed of any changes to the law and reporting requirements.

Renewing your registration

Have you renewed your registration? The registration period commences on 1 December each year and registrations must be renewed by 30 November. If you haven't renewed your registration, you're now in the 'late period' but you must renew now or risk dropping off the register. If your name drops off the register, you may no longer use the protected title of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner. Please call 08 8901 8562 if you have any questions or need any help renewing your registration.

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.

Further information

The Board publishes a range of information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners on its [website](#). Practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Practitioners.

For more information about registration, notifications or other matters relevant to the Scheme please refer to the information published on www.ahpra.gov.au. Alternatively, contact AHPRA by an [online enquiry form](#) or phone 1300 419 495.

Follow AHPRA on social media

Connect with AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) to receive information about important topics for your profession and participate in the discussion.



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.

Keep in touch with the Board

Call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 or 08 8901 8562 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.

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

Renee Owen

Chair

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia

17 December 2018