



Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Health Practice  
Chinese Medicine  
Chiropractic  
Dental  
Medical  
Medical Radiation Practice  
Nursing and Midwifery  
Occupational Therapy  
Optometry  
Osteopathy  
Pharmacy  
Physiotherapy  
Podiatry  
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

## Public consultation

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15 July 2019

### Draft proposed professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners

**We welcome your feedback on the enclosed *Draft proposed professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners* by email to [accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au) by close of business on 9 September 2019.**

#### Introduction

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee (the Accreditation Committee) has developed the *Draft proposed professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners* (draft proposed professional capabilities) as part of their review of the current *Accreditation Standards: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice* (2013 accreditation standards). The draft proposed professional capabilities are being developed in a separate document (and as an appendix) to the revised accreditation standards (2019 accreditation standards). The draft proposed professional capabilities describe the threshold level of professional capability required for general registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner in Australia.

#### Preliminary consultation

From mid-March until mid-May 2019 the Accreditation Committee undertook a targeted preliminary consultation to key stakeholders. Preliminary consultation enabled the Accreditation Committee to test proposals and refine them before proceeding to public consultation. It also provided an opportunity for feedback to improve the clarity of the consultation documents.

A range of stakeholders submitted written responses, including professional associations, jurisdictions (Commonwealth and state/territory health departments) and individuals.

The Accreditation Committee is now releasing its draft proposed professional capabilities for public feedback.

#### Providing feedback

The Accreditation Committee is seeking to consult on their draft proposed professional capabilities (attached). In addition to general feedback, they are interested in stakeholders' feedback on specific questions about the draft professional capabilities.

Feedback can be provided by sending a written submission by email to [accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au).

This should be provided by close of business on **9 September 2019**.

Submissions for website publication should be sent in Word format or equivalent.<sup>1</sup>

### **Publication of submissions**

The Accreditation Committee and AHPRA publish submissions at their discretion.

We generally publish submissions on our websites to encourage discussion and inform the community and stakeholders. Please advise us if you do not want your submission published.

We will not place on our websites, or make available to the public, submissions that contain offensive or defamatory comments or which are outside the scope of the subject of the consultation. Before publication, we may remove personally-identifying information from submissions, including contact details.

The views expressed in the submissions are those of the individuals or organisations who submit them, and their publication does not imply any acceptance of, or agreement with, these views by the National Boards.

The Accreditation Committee and AHPRA accept submissions made in confidence. These submissions will not be published on the website or elsewhere. Submissions may be confidential because they include personal experiences or other sensitive information. Any request for access to a confidential submission will be determined in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth), which has provisions designed to protect personal information and information given in confidence. Please let us know if you do not want us to publish your submission or want us to treat all or part of it as confidential.

**Published submissions will include the names of the individuals and/or the organisations that made the submission unless confidentiality is requested.**

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<sup>1</sup> We aim to publish documents in accessible formats (such as word files) to meet international website accessibility guidelines. Therefore, while you are welcome to supply a PDF file of your feedback, we ask that you also provide a text or word file. More information about this is available at [www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/Accessibility.aspx](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/Accessibility.aspx)

## Overview

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (the Board) to begin national regulation of the profession from 1 July 2012. The Board is responsible for the regulation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners and established the Accreditation Committee under the National Law in July 2012.

Most professions in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) have professional capabilities or competency standards that describe the threshold level of competence required for general registration as a practitioner in that profession in Australia. The current threshold level of competence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners is defined by the performance indicators in the units of competency of the HLT40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice. There is not currently a separate document that describes the threshold level of competence required for general registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

The Accreditation Committee first published accreditation standards in December 2013 and began a scheduled review of the document in late-2017. As part of this review, and with support from the Board, the Accreditation Committee are developing a separate document that describes the threshold level of competence required for general registration as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. This document will be titled "*Professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners*" and will describe the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner.

The 2013 accreditation standards are applicable to education providers delivering the HLT40213 Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Practice qualification (HLT40213 qualification). The 2013 accreditation standards require education providers to align the curricula of their programs of study (programs) for the HLT40213 qualification to align with the relevant units of competency in the HLT training package (on training.gov.au).

In contrast, the 2019 accreditation standards require education providers to align the curricula of their programs of study with the draft proposed professional capabilities.

This approach does not impact on accreditation of programs leading to the HLT40213 qualification but it supports development of a range of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care practice programs in the future.

The Accreditation Committee is consulting on the content of the draft proposed professional capabilities, through preliminary and then public consultation. Following analysis of feedback from preliminary consultation, the Accreditation Committee may adjust the draft proposed professional capabilities prior to public consultation. Following analysis of feedback from public consultation, the Accreditation Committee may further adjust the document as part of finalising the professional capabilities.

The final professional capabilities will be submitted to the Board to approve as part of the accreditation standards. Once approved, they will become the approved *Professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners*.

### **Scope of practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker and registered health practitioner workforce evolved from a need to provide culturally safe clinical and primary health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose health needs were not being met by mainstream services. This profession has existed nationally within Australia for over 40 years, with the inaugural National Aboriginal Health Worker conference being held in Darwin, Northern Territory in 1978.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) has developed a [\*National Framework for determining scope of practice for the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner Workforce.\*](#) The framework is a useful

mechanism for defining and employing 'scope of practice' in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care practice.

The framework suggests that scope of practice can be referred to in two ways:

- a profession's scope of practice, and
- an individual's scope of practice

The draft proposed professional capabilities do not seek to define or describe a 'scope of practice'. As part of the 2019 accreditation standards, they will provide a tool to ensure graduates have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to ensure safe primary health care practice within their 'scope of practice'.

### Approach to developing the proposed professional capabilities

The approach to the draft proposed professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners is informed by recent work on professional capabilities for other health professions within the National Scheme and the performance indicators in relevant units of competency in the HLT training package.

#### Key features of the draft proposed professional capabilities

1. The draft proposed professional capabilities are structured into five domains that include capabilities that are applicable to all registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. The domain titles are based on registered practitioner roles, for example Domain 2 is *Professional and ethical practitioner*.
2. The draft proposed professional capabilities describe the level of capability required for safe and competent primary health care practice by a registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner. The draft proposed capabilities are informed by capability principles to recognise that registered practitioners must be capable of taking appropriate and effective action to formulate and solve problems in both familiar and unfamiliar, complex and changing settings, rather than just showing that they know how to, and can perform practice-related tasks in isolation. In other words, practitioners should be capable of 'doing' rather than simply 'knowing'.
3. The draft proposed professional capabilities address cultural competence and cultural safety in practice. All health practitioners, including registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, in Australia require a working knowledge of factors that contribute to and influence the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. These factors include history, spirituality and relationship to land, and other determinants of health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Cultural competence is a commonly used term that encompasses patient/client-centred concepts focused on demonstrating cultural safety and cultural respect. It involves interacting effectively with and responding to each client. Culturally responsive practice requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners to reflect not only on their own culture, but that of their patient/client and to engage in new and ongoing learning relevant to cultural safety.

The draft proposed professional capabilities highlight the importance of cultural competence and cultural safety in the introduction to the professional capabilities, and by creating an enabling component about applying the principles of cultural competence and cultural safety to practice in *Domain 2 – Professional and ethical practitioner*. The National Scheme's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group's definition for cultural safety has been included in the draft proposed professional capabilities.

### The proposed structure of the professional capabilities

The draft proposed professional capabilities are organised into five domains that are applicable to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners. Each domain consists of key capabilities and corresponding enabling components.

## **Domains**

The domains comprise key capabilities that are thematically arranged and describe the essential characteristics of a competent registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner in Australia.

Domain 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner

Domain 2: Professional and ethical practitioner

Domain 3: Communicator and collaborator

Domain 4: Lifelong learner

Domain 5: Quality and risk manager

## **Key capabilities**

The key capabilities describe the key features of safe and competent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice in a range of contexts and situations of varied complexity and uncertainty. During any one patient/client interaction, or treatment, practitioners are expected to demonstrate key capabilities from various domains. This recognises that competent professional practice requires an ability to draw on and integrate the breadth of capabilities to support overall performance.

## **Enabling components**

The enabling components describe the essential and measurable characteristics of the corresponding key capabilities and facilitate assessment of performance in the practice setting. Safe and competent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners will demonstrate all enabling components for all key capabilities for safe and competent practice. This includes applying, adapting and synthesising new knowledge from experience to continually improve clinical and professional performance.

## **Next steps**

After public consultation closes, the Accreditation Committee will review and consider all feedback from this consultation before making decisions about the final version of the proposed professional capabilities.

Following analysis of feedback from the public consultation on the draft professional capabilities, the Accreditation Committee may adjust the draft professional capabilities prior to submitting them to the Board.

## Consultation questions

When providing comments, please use the word template to address the following public consultation questions:

1. Does any content need to be added to the draft professional capabilities?
2. Does any content need to be amended or removed from the draft professional capabilities?
3. Is the language clear and appropriate? Are there any potential unintended consequences of the current wording?
4. Are there jurisdiction-specific impacts for practitioners, or governments or other stakeholders that the Accreditation Committee should be aware of, if these professional capabilities are adopted?
5. Are there implementation issues the Accreditation Committee should be aware of?
6. Do you have any other feedback or comments on the proposed draft professional capabilities?

**Feedback can be provided by email to AHPRA at**

**[accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:accreditationstandards.review@ahpra.gov.au)**

**The closing date for feedback is 9 September 2019**

**For further information regarding the project, contact the Senior Accreditation Policy Advisor,  
Simon Spence**

**[simon.spence@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:simon.spence@ahpra.gov.au)**

## Attachments

Attachment A: *Draft proposed professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners*

Attachment B: response template for providing feedback