



Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Nursing and Midwifery
Optometry

Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

AHPRA REPORT

AHPRA Report Edition 4, September 2011

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the fourth edition of *AHPRA Report!* This is our regular update to everyone interested in the work of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

AHPRA has continued to make improvements in its services to practitioners and the community. Recent initiatives include a new online service which allows health practitioners to print a copy of their registration certificate and continued expansion of our online graduate registration services.

We have also established a new online service in partnership with the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII). This searchable library of hearing decisions includes panel and hearing outcomes and tribunal decisions associated with health practitioner boards before July 2010 and decisions made since the National Scheme commenced. The library is hosted by AustLII and is accessible through the AHPRA website. There is also a link to NSW Tribunal decisions which are published on the Medical Council of NSW and the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission websites.

Registration renewal services have been working smoothly. In our first year, online renewal rates have increased from an average of 60% to more than 80% of practitioners renewing online. A major renewal for nearly 105,000 health practitioners due to renew by 30 November is underway.

By the end of 2012, the renewal dates for the 10 health professions regulated under the National Scheme will be largely aligned to new national registration renewal dates of 31 May (nurses and midwives), 30 September



(medical) and 30 November (chiropractors, dental practitioners, optometrists, osteopaths, pharmacists, physiotherapists, podiatrists and psychologists). Practitioners with limited and provisional registration will continue to have specific renewal dates tied to their initial registration.

This past month saw the annual gathering of all National Boards and AHPRA for the third annual National Registration and Accreditation Scheme conference. For the first time, this included members of the four new boards for the 2012 professions, as well as a number of chairs of state, territory and regional boards along with representatives of the NSW health professional councils.

With a theme of 'Now we are one,' the meeting reviewed the achievements of the first year of the National Scheme. It also discussed the implementation of the co-regulatory model in NSW involving AHPRA, National Boards, the Health Care Complaints Commission and the health professional councils. There was a workshop to discuss a number of de-identified case studies along with a lively hypothetical panel chaired by Dr Norman Swan. There was also discussion about succession planning for National Boards, as board appointments are for an initial period of three years ending mid 2012. »

AHPRA has also been busy preparing its 2010-2011 annual report, which was provided to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council today. AHPRA can release the report publicly after it has been tabled by a state or territory parliament. The report is the first since the National Scheme began and includes detailed data about our first year of operation. It provides a first national snapshot of health practitioner regulation and includes detailed information about registrations and notifications

with breakdowns per jurisdiction and per profession and an update on AHPRA's intensive work program.

We will be publishing a special edition of *AHPRA Report* to highlight key elements of the annual report, once it is publicly available.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

Renew online, on time! 30 November health practitioner renewal

AHPRA has now launched its registration renewal campaign for nearly 105,000 health practitioners in Australia due to renew their registration by 30 November 2011.

The eight professions due to renew by 30 November are chiropractic, dental practice, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

Practitioners in these professions in some states and territories renewed their registration in June 2011 for five months and are due to renew again by 30 November this year, to align with the new national renewal date.

The renewal campaign will include at least three renewal reminder emails (where AHPRA has email addresses). Hard-copy letters will be sent to all practitioners who do not renew after the email prompts, or for whom AHPRA does not hold email contact details.

Chiropractors will be able to renew their registration online for the first time since the National Scheme commenced. To coincide with the renewal process, the Chiropractic Board of Australia is seeking feedback from practitioners about a range of important regulatory issues for their profession, through an online survey.



AHPRA and the National Boards are working closely with each of these professions to support the renewal campaign. This work includes inviting professional associations and employers to publish newsletter and online reminders for practitioners to renew online, on time. Support from professional associations will be critical for these professions, as many practitioners operate in small private practices.

To date, AHPRA has email addresses for more than 91% of registered practitioners, which enables direct and effective communication about important issues for each profession. However, the rate of email addresses provided is spread unevenly across the professions. AHPRA is calling on practitioners due to renew by 30 November to update their contact details, especially email, so they can receive direct communications from AHPRA and their National Board.

Audit pilot project

AHPRA and the National Boards are developing a nationally-consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards (criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development). A pilot will trial the framework for auditing compliance to meet relevant legislative requirements, set the scope and terms of reference for the audit, determine frequency, size and type of audits and establish a methodology and process for reporting on findings.

Initially, the pilot audit will be conducted with pharmacy practitioners early in 2012. The pilot will select a random sample audit of pharmacists who have renewed their registration and will review compliance with all of the mandatory registration standards. Additional information will be sought from pharmacists who do not appear to have met the mandatory standards of registration with a particular focus on the CPD requirements.

AHPRA and the National Boards will be providing more detail to practitioners as the audit approach is further developed and details of the pilot are confirmed.

Current consultations

The National Boards continue to work hard to build a robust policy framework to support their role of protecting the public and facilitating access to health services. Under the National Law, the boards develop and consult on registration standards that all registered practitioners must meet. To complement these, the boards have developed a range of profession-specific guidelines, codes and policies to provide clear guidance to practitioners and the community.

Practitioners should keep an eye on current consultations being undertaken by the National Boards which are published on the AHPRA and board websites. The National Boards and AHPRA look regularly for feedback from the community, practitioners, professional associations and other stakeholders on a range of important issues for the regulated professions.

The 2012 professions are currently consulting on the draft registration standards that all practitioners registered in the following professions will need to meet:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice
- Chinese medicine practice
- medical radiation practice and
- occupational therapy.



The Dental Board of Australia is currently consulting on proposed guidelines on conscious sedation area of practice endorsement (open until 7 October 2011).

The Optometry Board of Australia is currently consulting on therapeutics qualifications as a requirement for general registration (open until 3 October 2011) and on supervision guidelines for optometrists (open until 18 November 2011).

The Psychology Board of Australia is currently consulting on a revised registration standard and guidelines on professional indemnity insurance for psychologists (open until 2 November 2011).

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia has recently launched a revised registration standard on English language skills which was approved by the Ministerial Council and came into effect on 19 September 2011.

Action on advertising

The National Law includes new obligations in relation to advertising by registered health practitioners. All National Boards have developed advertising guidelines that clarify the boards' expectations of practitioners in this area. Each National Board's guidelines are accessible on their Board website and through the AHPRA website.

For many professions and in many jurisdictions, both the legal framework and the standards expected by the National Boards are different to those in place before July 2010. In recognition of this, for the first year of the National Scheme, the boards have taken a largely educative approach to help practitioners understand the law and the new requirements set down in each board's advertising guidelines.

The boards expect practitioners to ensure that any advertising complies with the guidelines. The coming year will see a more structured approach to addressing concerns about advertising. This will include an escalating series of warnings to practitioners, initially reminding them of their obligations about advertising and ultimately,

possible prosecution for non-compliance with the board's requirements. If a National Board deems that a practitioner's failure to comply with a board's request warrants it, matters related to advertising can also be progressed through the conduct, health and performance pathways.

AHPRA will also be working with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to ensure the most appropriate investigation and prosecution of false and misleading advertising.

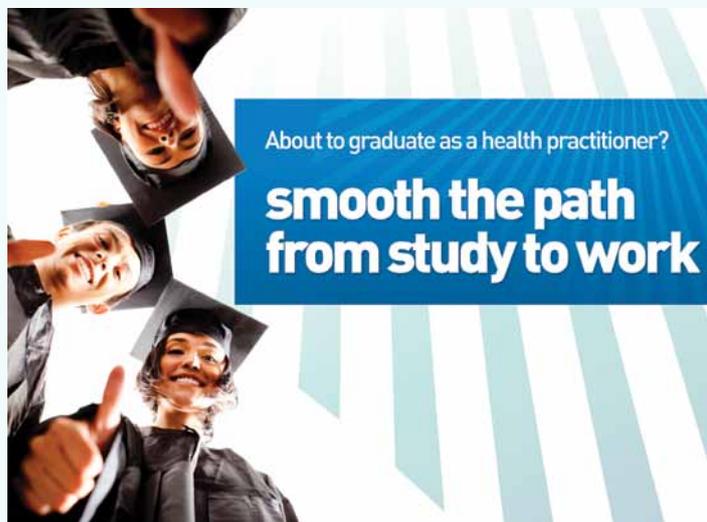
The role of the National Boards is to protect the public. Anyone with concerns about their health practitioner, or advertising by health practitioners that does not appear to be in the public interest, should contact AHPRA. The Boards rely on the public and members of the profession to bring their concerns to the Boards' attention, as advertising, particularly through web-based media, can be difficult to monitor.

It is important to note that neither the National Boards nor AHPRA review or vet specific advertising proposed by practitioners for compliance with advertising guidelines.

Online registration for new graduates

AHPRA is geared up to register new graduates who will be completing their courses at the end of the year, ready to join Australia's health workforce.

To smooth the path from study to work, AHPRA has this year introduced online registration for most applicants and is encouraging graduating students to apply for registration early. Teams in AHPRA state and territory offices are working with education providers, health departments, employers and student associations to support our early, online application campaign. AHPRA is encouraging students who are about to complete board-approved programs of study to apply for registration four to six weeks before they complete their course.



There are five simple steps to graduate registration:

1. Students apply for registration four to six weeks before completing their course at: www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications.aspx.
2. Applicants fill out an online application (if eligible) or download an application form. All applications require some documents to be sent to AHPRA by mail.
3. Education providers advise AHPRA when applicants are eligible to graduate.
4. AHPRA finalises assessment, confirms registration, publishes new graduates' names on the register of practitioners and sends out registration certificates.
5. New graduates are registered and eligible to start working as soon as their name is published on the register of practitioners.

More detail about graduate registration, including frequently asked questions and answers, links to online applications and a flyer are published on the [AHPRA](http://www.ahpra.gov.au) website.

10 facts about AHPRA

1. More than 530,000 health practitioners from 10 professions were registered under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme on 30 June 2011
2. More than 46,000 health practitioners across the professions registered in the first year of the National Scheme, many for the first time which means new practitioners delivering health services throughout Australia
3. AHPRA renewed the registration of more than 630,000 health practitioners during its first year. Some practitioners renewed more than once in the process of aligning national renewal dates for each profession
4. The AHPRA website at www.ahpra.gov.au hosted close to six million visits in the first year
5. AHPRA responded to 310,000 phone calls to state and territory offices from January to June 2011
6. AHPRA issued 850,000 certificates of registration to health practitioners across Australia in its first year
7. There are almost 100,000 students on the student register introduced in April 2011
8. AHPRA conducted Australia's largest-ever simultaneous renewal of health practitioner registration in May and June 2011 when 320,000 practitioners renewed
9. More than 91% of practitioners have provided their email address to AHPRA, improving direct communication about registration renewals and important Board issues
10. One in 44 Australians – or one of every 20 working Australians – is a registered health practitioner.

AHPRA people: Meet Jill Huck, AHPRA's NT Manager

AHPRA's Northern Territory Manager Jill Huck, is confident the four professions to join the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2012 will benefit from lessons learned in the past 14 months.

"The stand-out lesson from the National Scheme's early days is the importance of making AHPRA's services easily accessible to the public and practitioners, particularly the importance of having easy access to knowledgeable staff members by phone," Jill said.

"Customer service, especially the convenient access to accurate information, is a high priority for the organisation. Multiple strategies are now in place including a much improved phone system, local customer service teams, web enquiries system, email information campaigns and comprehensive websites to meet these needs."

Before joining AHPRA, Jill was director of the Northern Territory's Health Professions Licensing Authority for five years and Registrar of 11 health practitioner registration boards and the Health Professionals Review Tribunal. Under an agreement negotiated between AHPRA and the Northern Territory Department of Health, Jill continues to be the Registrar for the Northern Territory Boards regulating occupational therapists, Aboriginal health workers and radiographers – three professions scheduled to join the National Scheme in 2012.

Given that three professions currently regulated by NT boards will become part of the National Scheme next year, Jill is focused on a seamless transition for these professions and is confident current arrangements will support this.

"The role of Registrar of the three NT boards fits neatly into the role of NT Manager of AHPRA with a similar range of responsibilities for supporting the core business of these boards and providing the full range of registration, notification and board support functions," Jill said.

"While the legislation and registration data base used to support these functions are different to those for the National Scheme, there is a high level of synergy between the processes required."

A major challenge for integrating the four new professions is that they are not regulated in all jurisdictions.

Chinese medicine, set to also join the National Scheme, is currently regulated only in Victoria. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners are only regulated in the Northern Territory.

"The greatest challenge will be in communicating the change to the practitioners in jurisdictions where they are not currently regulated," Jill said.



"The four professions joining the National Scheme in 2012 have been preparing for this for some time and a lot of work is being done by the new National Boards and AHPRA in the lead-up to commencement to get the message out there," Jill said. She is confident the professions will notice many benefits in 'joining the NRAS family'.

"Regulation under the National Scheme will mean ease of movement to work anywhere in Australia, consistent registration standards and processes and a higher level of protection against poor standards of practice for the public," she said.

The NT AHPRA office has 18 full-time equivalent staff members who have worked together with boards to administer a momentous change in health regulation.

"One of my highlights as NT manager has been working with the excellent staff and board members who are part of the National Scheme" Jill said.

"Both staff and board members have worked extremely hard to make the new National Scheme work and should be congratulated on a successful partnership and the superhuman effort involved. On a personal note, I believe the potential to be involved in national issues and projects that improve health regulation in Australia is limitless," she said.

"Now that AHPRA has bedded down the basics, with continuous improvement, I am looking forward to working with my counterparts and the boards on future innovation of delivery of the National Scheme.

"I am excited about the challenges ahead, particularly the integration of the four new professions into the National Scheme."

Jill has extensive experience working with programs in key health and welfare areas, including mental health, human research ethics, social security, human rights and equal opportunity and has held academic posts at the Charles Darwin University and Central Queensland University. She also has extensive experience as a tribunal and board member, and retains current statutory appointments as a community member of the NT Mental Health Review Tribunal and the NT Parole Board. Jill's qualifications include a Bachelor of Social Work (Hons) from University of NSW and a Master of Social Policy (Class 1) from James Cook University.

Advice and information

Information online

Our [website](#) is a great place to start when you are looking for information on many different questions about the National Scheme. Try our new and improved search function to find the information you need quickly.

Email advice

Submit an [online enquiry form](#) any time and we will get back to you as soon as possible. There are categories of enquiries to select, reflecting the most common information requests, including getting your user ID and pass code reissued, or checking your application status.

Phone

Our customer service teams in each of our state and territory offices have a detailed knowledge and understanding of our rules, standards, guidance and advice. Call from within Australia on 1300 419 495 between 09:00am – 05:00pm local time or from overseas on +61 3 8708 9001 between 09:00am – 05:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time Monday to Friday.

State and Territory offices

AHPRA has an office in each capital city. [Contact details](#) are published on our website.



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Publications and other information

National Boards produce registration standards, along with guidance and advice that expand on these standards, to support professional practice. We publish detailed information on the National Board websites about registration standards and a wide range of general news and information relevant to health practitioners. You can access all publications through the [AHPRA website](#) which provides a portal to the websites of the National Boards.

Think before you print

Any comments?

If you have any comments about this report, please [email us](#).

Further information can be found on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency website at www.ahpra.gov.au.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

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