

AHPRA Report Edition 6, December 2011

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the sixth edition of *AHPRA Report*! This is our regular update to everyone interested in the work of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in partnership with the National Boards.

2011 has been a significant year for AHPRA. Our major focus has been to ensure all of our processes and systems are working well and that we are providing high-quality, nationally-consistent services to the community and health practitioners. Much has been achieved; for example, the success of each of our large national registration renewal campaigns.

Each month, we host more than 440,000 visits to the AHPRA website. Online information and services are being added all the time. For example, in this edition of *AHPRA Report*, you can read about the launch of a new online application service for provisional registrants in medicine and pharmacy who are applying for general registration. AHPRA has worked with the Medical Board of Australia and the Pharmacy Board of Australia to streamline the documentation requirements wherever possible. Early, online application by interns is the fastest and most efficient pathway from provisional to general registration.

AHPRA has also boosted online capacity so enrolled nurses with current registration can now apply online if they become eligible to apply for registration as a registered nurse. More information is published at [the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia website](#).

Our customer service teams in each of our state and territory offices are responding to up to 2,000 phone enquiries each day from practitioners and members of the community. Our [Annual Report](#) provides a comprehensive overview of our achievements over the past year and the work underway in a number of important areas.



For the first time ever, the report provided comprehensive national information about health practitioner regulation in Australia. This includes detail about the profiles of practitioners per state or territory and per profession, as demonstrated by registration data. There is information on notifications made about the conduct, health and performance of Australia's registered practitioners. Detail about the outcome of criminal history checking and mandatory reporting is also included. AHPRA published a [special edition of *AHPRA Report*](#) to make the annual report more accessible.

AHPRA and the National Boards are developing a nationally-consistent approach to auditing the compliance of health practitioners with mandatory registration standards. This includes standards for English language skills, criminal history, recency of practice, continuing professional development and professional indemnity insurance. A pilot project with pharmacy practitioners will be held in early 2012 to test the framework for auditing compliance to meet relevant legislative requirements, set the scope and terms of reference for the audit, and determine frequency, size and type of audits. It will also establish a methodology and process for reporting on findings. Detailed information will be provided to all practitioners in 2012 as the audit approach is further developed, informed by feedback from the pilot project. The audit framework will be implemented from 1 July 2012. »

Substantial work continues in preparation for the four professions new to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme joining from 1 July 2012. The new National Boards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice and occupational therapy have recently consulted on the registration standards that will apply to practitioners in their professions for recommendation to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. Submissions received are available on the [Board websites](#). These Boards are also seeking feedback on advertising guidelines, a code of conduct for registered practitioners and on guidelines for mandatory notifications.

And finally, an important reminder: health practitioners whose registration expired on 30 November 2011 have until the end of December 2011 to apply to renew their registration. Health practitioners may continue to practise

while their application to renew registration is being assessed. Practitioners can check their [application to renew registration has been received](#) on the AHPRA website. If a practitioner does not apply to renew within one month after their registration expiry date, their registration will lapse. A late fee applies for registration renewals submitted after 30 November 2011.

Next year, *AHPRA Report* will be moving to a quarterly email format. I hope you continue to find it a useful update on the work of AHPRA and we welcome your feedback.

On behalf of AHPRA, thank you for your support and interest in our work. I wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

AHPRA launches online applications for provisional registrants

Medical and pharmacy interns with provisional registration can now apply [online](#) for general registration.

Boosted online capability and changes to National Board requirements for documentation will increase efficiency and cut red tape. The quickest and easiest way for an intern to apply for general registration is online.

AHPRA and the National Boards are encouraging all pharmacy and medical interns who currently hold provisional registration and who expect to complete their internship soon, to apply online now.

Pharmacy interns will need to support their online application with documentation subsequently, demonstrating they have completed their internship successfully. Medical interns can apply online now, with confirmation later provided by employers that the internship has been completed successfully.

The National Boards have streamlined the documentation requirements for these applicants, to smooth the transition from provisional to general registration. Provisional registrants do not need to resupply documentation already provided to AHPRA when they apply for general registration. Details about the documentation requirements are published at [AHPRA's website under *Registration*](#).



Extending provisional registration

Pharmacy interns with provisional registration who will not complete their internship within one month of the expiry date of their current provisional registration can apply online to extend their provisional registration.

Medical interns who need to apply to renew their provisional registrations should email interns@ahpra.gov.au with their provisional registration number (available on AHPRA's website by searching the [Register of Practitioners](#)), name and date of birth and they will receive the appropriate form to enable them to apply to renew their provisional registration.

Anyone with provisional registration who needs to make a declaration about criminal history or impairment should apply for general registration early, as these applications require third party verification and can take longer to assess.

Registration renewal

Around 94% of registered health practitioners in Australia successfully renewed their registration by 30 November 2011 – on time, and 88% of these renewed online. Practitioners of chiropractic, dental practice, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, psychology, optometry and osteopathy were due to renew by 30 November, the new annual registration renewal date for these professions. Some Western Australian nurses and midwives are due to renew by 31 December 2011.

Practitioners whose registration expired on 30 November 2011 have until 31 December 2011 to renew registration. Under the National Law, these practitioners remain registered during this one month 'late period'. But their registrations will lapse if they do not apply to renew within one month of their registration expiry date. They also have to pay an additional late fee.

The registration renewal process was supported this year by an extensive communications campaign aimed at encouraging the professions to renew on time. AHPRA and the National Boards tried to strike a balance between making sure all practitioners were aware of their responsibility to renew, and over-supplying reminders. As practitioners become more familiar with the renewal cycle and the requirements of the National Law, AHPRA and the Boards will review the volume of reminders sent to practitioners.



A fast-track application process is open for one month after the late period ends. Fast-track applications can usually be assessed within 48 to 72 hours of receipt of a completed application; however, a criminal record check is required.

The National Boards have also approved a new certificate of registration that will contain the same information as the current certificate but will be A5 (half A4 size) which will reduce print and postage costs.

Registered practitioners can download, at no cost, a copy of their certificate of registration through online facilities on [AHPRA's website](#) under *Your account*.

Consultations

The National Boards continue to consult on a range of important issues for their professions. Feedback from the consultations informs the development of policies, codes, guidelines and standards that support the Boards' role of protecting the public and facilitating access to health services.

Acupuncture: The Australian Physiotherapy Council invited submissions from key stakeholders as part of a broad consultation (Stage 2) on the draft accreditation standard for the assessment of programs of study relevant to the endorsement of a registered health practitioner to practice as an acupuncturist. The Physiotherapy Board of Australia endorsed this [consultation](#).

Psychology: The Psychology Board of Australia has published an exposure draft on the national psychology examination curriculum and an exposure draft on guidelines for supervisors and supervisor training providers. These documents are [available for comment](#) until Friday 27 January 2012.



Definition of practice: The National Law does not define *practice*. The National Boards agreed to a common definition of practice and incorporated this into a range of registration standards that came into effect on 1 July 2010 with the start of the National Scheme, after a period of consultation.

Registered health practitioners work in various settings using their knowledge and skills as qualified health practitioners. The current definition of practice is broad. »

It takes into consideration the evolving nature of health care and the practice of the health professions, allowing for technological innovation and other changes to health care delivery. To limit the definition of practice to specified tasks, defined scopes of practice or only direct patient/client care relationships may inadvertently restrict the practice of the health professions and the delivery of health care services, contrary to the interests of the public. However, some National Boards received feedback from stakeholders that the very broad definition of practice used in the registration standards has caused practical difficulties and resulted in unintended consequences. Seven National Boards have consulted on the definition of practice recently. Submissions received on this consultation are [accessible here](#).

International criminal history checks: Early in 2012, the National Boards will consult on issues around international criminal history checks. Under the National Law, a Board is responsible both for protecting the public, and for enabling the continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable workforce. International criminal history checking requires a Board to strike a balance between these two requirements by establishing a policy that provides appropriate safeguards without undue red tape. Watch [the National Board websites](#) in the New Year for more information and a consultation paper.

AHPRA people: Meet Lisa Wardlaw-Kelly

AHPRA's Tasmania State Manager Lisa Wardlaw-Kelly manages one of the smaller state offices supporting implementation of the National Scheme but is acutely aware of the importance of her staff's work and its effect on the 'bigger picture' of health practitioner regulation.

An important part of Lisa's work is to ensure that the Tasmanian State Office provides the best service possible to national, state and regional health practitioner boards to support sound decision-making.

Lisa's experience with the Department of Health and Ageing, supporting various ministerial advisory councils and committees, gave her a firm insight into understanding the difference a good secretariat can make.

"Sometimes people think of secretariat work as second order but it is actually a critical enabler of good decision-making," she said.

"As a result, I play an active role nationally in helping to improve our services to boards. Our office strives to provide high-quality services to our boards and I believe this is an area of pride for my staff."

Lisa's time at the Australian Bureau of Statistics saw her formally trained in Business Process Management (BPM) and she was on the bureau's national BPM project board.

During this time she had national program responsibility for implementing a number of the bureau's survey programs, including the second biggest collection in Australia after the Census.



"Working with world-class statistical governance processes was a good training ground and I bring the knowledge I gained in this setting to AHPRA's business process improvement work, both nationally and in our office," Lisa said.

"One area in which we have seen improvement is the quality assurance processes for board papers. We consulted with state boards and staff to develop processes and protocols to ensure that all papers meet the standards for timeliness and quality," she said.

"We also undertook an analysis of our information management processes, and this area continues to be the focus of staff-led efficiency improvements."

Lisa said there were many advantages to working in a smaller state office, such as the whole Tasmanian team working across the 10 health professions.

"This means we have a really 'joined up' view of the National Scheme and understand the connections, and the differences between the professions. The challenge is to ensure that we have a solid understanding of the unique requirements of each profession," Lisa said. »

"I like to think that being a small state we are also close to our customers and the community we serve, recognising that the service we offer is consistent nationally."

Lisa came to AHPRA from her role as Tasmanian Regional Director with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and has a strong interest in evidence-based policy and the use of data to improve decision-making.

"My past experience as a senior manager in the Australian Bureau of Statistics has made me passionate about the value of quality information to our society," Lisa said.

"Australia's population is heading towards a demographic transition where the proportion of working age individuals will decrease, thus putting profound pressure on our health workforce.

"In this new era of health practitioner regulation, the national Register of Practitioners has the potential to be a vital information asset for workforce planning."

Lisa said the national register would support research, policy discussion, planning and decision-making to ensure the best use of Australia's health workforce in the future.

"One of the areas of potential over time is to draw on national registration data to deliver real-time analyses about the practice issues relating to different segments of the health workforce, including new graduates, older practitioners or overseas-qualified practitioners.

"We may find that the evidence challenges our assumptions and alters the course of previous planning."

Lisa has also been the State Manager with the Department of Health and Ageing, delivering Australian Government programs including aged and community care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, population health, rural health and primary care.

Before this position, Lisa spent 10 years in health policy and regulation, including leading national evidence-based strategies for clinical improvement in the health priority areas of diabetes and cardiovascular disease; management of the Australian Government's health portal, HealthInsite; and the national cervical cancer screening program.

Lisa's academic qualifications include a Certificate of Enrolled Nursing from Canberra Hospital School of Nursing, a Bachelor of Arts (honours) from Australian National University, a Graduate Certificate in Public Administration and a Master of Public Health from La Trobe University.

Holiday season and AHPRA office hours

This will be the last AHPRA Report for 2011. We look forward to returning in early 2012 with our new quarterly format to update you on the work of AHPRA and the National Boards in delivering the National Scheme.

Over the holiday season, AHPRA offices in each state and territory will be closed on all standard public holidays (26 and 27 December 2011 and 2 January 2012). Our offices will be open for standard operating hours on all other weekdays. Our websites – and all online services – will operate throughout this period.



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.



Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Nursing and Midwifery
Optometry

Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

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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