



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

AHPRA REPORT

AHPRA Report Edition 8, June 2012

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the second birthday edition of *AHPRA Report*, our regular update to everyone interested in our work. 1 July 2012 marks the second anniversary of AHPRA and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. Western Australia will celebrate this anniversary on 18 October 2012.

Another significant milestone will be achieved on 1 July 2012 when four new professions join the National Scheme. Further information about the extensive program of work to transition around 32,000 new health practitioners is outlined in this edition of *AHPRA Report*, including arrangements for the immediate transition period post 1 July 2012.

The second year of AHPRA has provided opportunities to both consolidate our work and introduce new ways of working, most notably in registrations and renewals, customer service, and management of notifications about practitioners. We have particularly focused on improvements and additions online to streamline, simplify and speed up our services. It is encouraging to see that practitioners are taking up these opportunities. In our largest ever annual renewal, an impressive 94% of nurses and midwives who renewed on time this year used AHPRA's online renewal services.

Most practitioners completing online renewal are also completing the annual Workforce Survey which, combined with our registration data, is informing health workforce planning for Australia. More complete and consistent workforce data is an important benefit of national registration. National Boards have recently started publishing regular snapshots of data about registered practitioners. We have also formalised arrangements for data sharing with Health Workforce Australia and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.



Since July 2011, we have made it possible for practitioners to print a copy of their Certificate of Registration from the website, with more than 211,000 certificates being printed in this way in this time. The certificates direct readers to the online public registers of practitioners for the most up-to-date registration information about all health practitioners.

The national registers are the core, real-time source of registration information for health practitioners, the community and employers. The transparency of the registers of practitioners have been improved through recent revisions to the online glossary that explain common terms such as 'condition', 'undertaking', 'reprimand', and 'caution'. Direct links from the national registers to the glossary aim to improve the overall clarity and readability of the registers for the community.

Promoting community awareness of the national registers and the work of AHPRA and the National Boards is an ongoing focus. Starting in Western Australia, we have recently commenced a program of community forums to increase community understanding and engagement with our work. »

« During the year, AHPRA also embedded online registration for new graduates to smooth the path from study to work, and for pharmacy and medical interns with provisional registration to apply for general registration. Other online tools have been developed to help practitioners meet the requirements of registration, including templates for continuing professional development logs in podiatry, chiropractic, and psychology and a search function for approved supervisors for psychology practitioners.

Building on all that has been achieved, our continued commitment in our third year is to consistency, service and capability. Our 2012-13 business plan identifies six strategic priorities, together with a range of objectives and initiatives to help us achieve them.

1. Regulate in the public interest in strong partnership with Boards
2. Facilitate health workforce development
3. Ensure a nationally consistent experience for all stakeholders
4. Develop a capable and efficient organisation
5. Deliver reliable, accurate, safe and purposeful information, infrastructure and systems, and
6. Demonstrate productivity gains.

We will be soon be publishing more information about our business plan and how it will shape our operations in 2012-13.

We will also be launching the first AHPRA Service Charter, which defines what we do and how we do it. The Charter will outline the values that guide AHPRA, the standards of service that practitioners and the community can expect, and the steps to be taken if these standards are not met. The Service Charter will shortly be available from [AHPRA's website](#) and will be reviewed in 12 months. I welcome your feedback.

On our first anniversary in July 2011, I concluded that, quietly, the benefits of national registration were being progressively realised. On our second anniversary, I am confident that we have the fundamentals working well, and that, in partnership with National Boards, our focus on consistency, service and capability will continue to bring out the best of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for all Australians.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive
martin.fletcher@ahpra.gov.au

Four new professions regulated from 1 July 2012

On 1 July 2012, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, medical radiation practitioners and occupational therapists join the National Scheme.

The smooth transition of these four new professions to the National Scheme has been a primary focus for the National Boards leading up to 1 July, working closely with AHPRA.

Unlike the transition to the National Scheme in 2010, these professions have not previously been regulated in all states and territories. This means that more than 16,000 practitioners are transitioning from an existing state or territory board, and that more than 14,000 practitioners will be registering for the first time.

An extensive range of activities to support the entry of these professions has been undertaken by National Boards, in partnership with AHPRA, including:

- working closely with existing state and territory registration boards to ensure the integrity of the transfer of data from their systems into our databases, including rigorous testing of systems and technologies
- national advertising to inform practitioners and the community about the change



- direct communication with known practitioners, large employers and other stakeholders about how they will be affected
- conducting face-to-face-forums around the country, to speak with practitioners directly and answer questions, and
- publishing extensive supporting information and frequently asked questions and answers, including translated materials for Chinese medicine practitioners.

Practitioners who have transitioned into the National Scheme, or have been registered for the first time, will receive an email welcoming them to the scheme. Shortly afterwards, their Certificate of Registration will be mailed to them. They can also check their registration status on the public registers of practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au. Remember that all registrants »

« will receive a new registration number so it is better to search for a practitioner by name and profession.

If a practitioner has applied for registration which hasn't yet been approved, they will receive correspondence from AHPRA confirming that their application has been received. In these cases, they can continue to practise while the application is being assessed, under a special transitional policy (unless there is a concern about public health or safety). This also serves as a statement of evidence for their employer that they can continue to work. AHPRA has also published advice for employers on its website about these arrangements.

From 1 July, practitioners who have not lodged an application, or supplied additional information to AHPRA when requested, may be taken to be in breach of a protected title under the National Law and penalties may apply. AHPRA's message to these practitioners is one of urgency – you must apply now, or provide the requested information, before continuing to practise.

More information

For more information, visit the relevant website.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia: www.atsihealthpracticeboard.gov.au
- Chinese Medicine Board of Australia: www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au
- Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia: www.medicalradiationpracticeboard.gov.au
- Occupational Therapy Board of Australia: www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au

Make enquiries by contacting AHPRA through the online enquiry form on our website or by calling AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Nursing and midwifery results: a new renewal record

The 2012 nursing and midwifery renewal cycle has set a new record in health practitioner registration in Australia. More than 333,000 nurses and midwives were due to renew their registration by 31 May – 100,000 more than were due to renew at the same time in 2011. The extra 100,000 practitioners over 12 months is explained by synchronised renewal dates and a small net increase in total registered practitioner numbers. This is the largest single renewal ever undertaken in Australia.

Ninety-three per cent of the nurses and midwives due to renew, did so on time – an impressive 94% of them online. This compares to 90% of nurses and midwives renewing on time in 2011, 85% online. This extra 9% in online renewals amounts to 30,000 fewer paper applications being assessed and processed by AHPRA.

The vast majority of nurses and midwives who have applied to renew have been granted registration and their details updated on the public register. In the small number of cases where practitioners have lodged an application which requires further assessment, these practitioners can keep practising while it is being assessed.

AHPRA's online services now give nurses and midwives the ability to 'opt out' of renewing their registration. This helps AHPRA to better understand the number of practitioners who have actively opted out of registration, compared to those who did not apply on time. Nurses or



midwives who 'opt out' of renewing their registration or who allow it to lapse must submit a new application for registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia if they wish to practise again.

It is fantastic to see so many nurses and midwives heed the call to renew registration on time and online. We have also benefitted from the support of key stakeholders including government departments, employers and professional associations as part of our communications campaign. The results show the systematic benefits of national regulation in providing practitioners with a smooth and simple renewal experience.

We will carefully review the renewal campaign to identify areas for learning and future improvement. Any feedback or ideas are always welcome.

For further information, or to provide your feedback, please contact communications@ahpra.gov.au.

National Board fees for 2012-13

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is self-funded, so National Boards must set registration and renewal fees to enable them to regulate their professions in the public interest and meet their responsibilities under the National Law. There is no cross subsidisation between National Boards.

The Medical Board of Australia has set its registration fee for 2012-2013 at \$680, limiting the increase to less than the national annual CPI of 1.6%. The annual renewal fee will apply from 1 July and cover the renewal period for most practitioners of 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013.

All other National Boards will be finalising their 2012 fees shortly. Details of each fee schedule will be published on each Board website, accessible from the [AHPRA website](#). Later in 2012, the National Boards will publish the Health Profession Agreement between each Board and AHPRA. The agreement sets out the services AHPRA will provide in supporting the Boards to regulate their profession.

Current and upcoming Board consultations

The National Boards 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.

Public consultation on international criminal history checks

The National Boards are working with the AHPRA to consult on options for refining international criminal history checks used to assess applications for registration as a health practitioner in Australia.

Under the National Scheme, National Boards develop registration standards that every registered practitioner must meet, once they have been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. One of these standards relates to criminal history, which is consistent across all national boards.

The current approach involves checking Australian criminal history through [CrimTrac](#) and requiring applicants to sign a declaration disclosing any criminal history outside Australia. When a criminal history is disclosed, further investigations are made and the criminal history is assessed according to the criminal history registration standard.

The National Boards must decide whether this approach is adequate or if they should increase the scrutiny of applicants' international criminal histories. In effect, the Boards must balance their responsibility under the National Law to protect the public, with the need to ensure there is no unnecessary red tape in assessing and managing applications for registration as a health practitioner in Australia.

sharing tools
sites people audiences
twitter blogs Communications
Social Media RSS strategic
WEB Resources questions
photos target discussion
video online find

Details of the options under consideration and background information in relation to international criminal history checks are published in a [consultation paper](#). AHPRA and the National Boards are seeking input on this complex issue. Feedback on the consultation is due by 17 August 2012.

Social media policy

The National Boards will shortly release a draft policy on social media for consultation. The draft policy, which has been agreed for consultation by all National Boards, confirms that health practitioners must abide by the relevant laws, their National Board's code of conduct, and the *Guidelines for the advertising of regulated health services* when they use social media.

Registered health practitioners should only post information on social media that:

- does not breach professional obligations
- does not breach confidentiality and privacy obligations (such as discussing patients or posting pictures of procedures, case studies, patients or sensitive material)
- presents information in an unbiased, evidence informed context
- does not make unsubstantiated claims, and/or
- does not use testimonials or purported testimonials in any capacity on any medium.

Watch the website for the opening of the consultation. »

« Dental Board discussion paper

The Dental Board of Australia is currently consulting on a discussion paper on anxiolysis. The paper complements the Board's recently released Guidelines on conscious sedation area of practice endorsement to provide information for practitioners in relation to the endorsement registration standard. The discussion paper is available for comment until 20 July 2012.

Registration standards

The National Boards have committed to reviewing their registration standards at least every three years. By mid 2013, the National Scheme will be three years old, which will trigger progressive review of the standards that have been in place since the start of the scheme.

In preparation, National Boards and AHPRA have commissioned research on English language skills testing, including the scope of exemptions from testing requirements. This research will inform the review of English language skills registration standards in 2013. The research evidence and other information from the review will be shared with the four professions joining the Scheme on 1 July 2012 so that they can consider any implications for their registration standards.

The existing standard was based on the approach of state and territory registration boards before July 2010, and informed by the consultation process that supported its development. The National Boards will consult on any changes to the English language skills registration standard in 2013.

National consistency in managing notifications

AHPRA continues to put a big emphasis on implementing nationally consistent processes for managing notifications about practitioners' conduct, performance or health Australia-wide.

A recent program of work involving notifications staff across AHPRA has culminated in a comprehensive set of updated guidance and tools for managing notifications. The procedures bring greater clarity to our work in notifications and will support the continued application of nationally consistent processes in all our state and territory offices. These updated and expanded procedures were launched in February 2012. By the end of May, all staff working in notifications in every state and territory had received intensive training.

Implementing these national notifications procedures marks an important milestone in our ongoing journey to embed national consistency. While every notification



is unique, AHPRA wants to ensure that the service we provide doesn't vary simply because of where practitioners live in Australia.

Building on this program of work, we are also improving our reporting capability, so we can better report data on the management and outcomes of notifications. From 1 July 2012, additional infrastructure will enable more detailed reporting both for the purposes of internal performance monitoring and public reporting of notification outcomes.

Release of quarterly registration data

Providing data that accurately reflects the number of registered practitioners is one of the important benefits of the National Scheme. It has enormous value for workforce planning and to helping improve access to health services. These data could not have been easily collated and reported before the advent of the National Scheme.

The 10 National Boards have released the first of their quarterly updates on registration data. These published data report on the March 2012 quarter. Registration data will in future be published quarterly, directly after the end of each quarter. The next data will be published in July 2012.

The data are reported separately for each National Board and include information about types of registration held, principal place of practice, endorsements, registrant age and gender. The data are published on the relevant Board's website under the *About* or *News* tab and are also accessible via www.ahpra.gov.au »

Data agreements

Arrangements for national health workforce data collection have been agreed under a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by AHPRA, Health Workforce Australia (HWA) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

AHPRA provides these agencies with de-identified information on all registrants, such as age, gender and location by profession and registration details. It also provides the annual Workforce Survey data that is collected as part of the online registration renewal process.

HWA and AIHW analysis of these data will support robust and informed decision-making about policy matters relating to Australia's health workforce.

AHPRA people: meet Richard Mullaly

As manager of an AHPRA state office servicing more than 140,000 health practitioners and the community, Richard Mullaly is strongly focused on consistency of process and efficiency when leading the Victorian staff.

Richard joined AHPRA as Victoria State Manager in February 2010 and has seen many advances in health practitioner regulation since the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme's implementation on 1 July 2010.

'Bringing together staff and data from close on 80 state and territory boards into a very new infrastructure with new legislation has been the most confronting test for the National Scheme's pioneers,' he said.

'Issues of preparedness and data management were always going to be challenging but no-one can deny the gains made since these early hurdles were overcome.'

There is much to reflect upon at the National Scheme's second anniversary.

'The requirements of implementing the National Scheme have resulted in critical changes, the most challenging being significant systematisation at a technical level and greater efficiency of process,' Richard said.

'These changes better support workforce mobility and provide for increased protection of the public than what was previously possible.'

'There is also more transparency and accountability which has a positive impact upon the service AHPRA provides to not only health practitioners but also the public.'

Richard said one challenge to be addressed was better understanding of the different roles of AHPRA and the National Boards.

'With four more professions set to join the National Scheme in July, it's important to remember that AHPRA does not set the practice codes and standards that guide the professions, the National Boards do.'



'The aim of the National Scheme is to protect the public and AHPRA works closely with boards to implement the requirements of the National Law when ensuring that only trained and qualified health practitioners are registered to practise.'

While change can be challenging, Richard is confident that an even more efficient National Scheme is possible for the future.

'Technological advances will allow for further streamlining of systems and lead to even more detailed utilisation of AHPRA data for the public and health professions' good,' he said.

'The key to this will be organisational support of staff through development and training and working hard to secure retention of the experienced staff we already have.'

Before joining AHPRA Richard was CEO of the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria for two years and before that the general manager of the Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne. He has extensive management and clinical experience in Victoria's public health system, was acting CEO of the Dental Health Services Victoria and spent 20 years at the Royal Children's Hospital as the Director of Perfusion Services in the Cardiac Surgery Unit.

Richard holds a MBA from Monash University and a B.Sc (Hons), also from Monash 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.

Current consultations

The National Boards frequently seek feedback from the professions, the community and other stakeholders on a range of issues. Check the National Board websites regularly via the [AHPRA website](#) to keep up to date with current consultations.

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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