



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 9, September 2012

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the ninth edition of AHPRA Report, our regular update to everyone interested in our work.

The past two months has seen the smooth entry of four new professions to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, medical radiation practitioners and occupational therapists. Unlike the transition to the National Scheme in 2010, these professions had not previously been regulated in all states and territories. This process has seen more than 16,000 practitioners transitioned from an existing state or territory board, and more than 14,000 practitioners being registered for the first time. All registered practitioners now appear on the National Registers.

In an important step towards greater transparency, for the first time AHPRA and each of the 14 National Boards are publishing their annual Health Profession Agreements (HPAs). Under the National Health Practitioner Regulation Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), the Boards and AHPRA work in partnership to implement the National Scheme, each with specific roles, powers and responsibilities. The guiding principles of the National Law require the National Scheme to operate in a 'transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and fair way'; and for registration fees to be reasonable 'having regard to the efficient and effective operation of the scheme'.



The HPA is the formal statement of the partnership between each National Board and AHPRA. It provides details of what services AHPRA will provide annually to each National Board and agreed measures of performance, budget and fees schedules as well as Board-specific work plans.

This past month saw the fourth annual meeting of all National Boards, the Agency Management Committee and AHPRA leadership teams. This included a number of chairs of state, territory and regional boards along with representatives of NSW Health Professional Councils, accreditation authorities, Health Workforce Australia and regulatory colleagues from New Zealand.

The meeting aimed to take stock of what we have achieved and provide an opportunity to discuss the year ahead. The conference featured a debate on issues related to balancing the sometimes competing principles of transparency and privacy in the National Scheme, particularly in relation to the National Registers.

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« Workshops focused on a diverse range of issues including future challenges for accreditation, assuring the competence of registered practitioners, practitioner regulation and workforce reform, issues and challenges in English language skills and competence, and prescribing pathways.

The latest registration data for the 10 professions regulated since 2010 have been published by AHPRA and the National Boards on our websites. This latest data reports on the quarter to June 2012.

These regular quarterly reports are designed to provide a snapshot of registered practitioners in each profession – information that was not easily collated or reported before the National Scheme was introduced. 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. The next set of quarterly data will include data for all of the regulated health professions.

We have also been preparing our 2011-2012 annual report, which is expected to be publicly released in early November. The report must be tabled in state, territory and commonwealth parliaments. The report is the second since the National Scheme began and details the work of AHPRA and the National Boards during the 2011/12 year. We will be publishing a special edition of AHPRA Report to highlight key elements of the annual report, when it is publicly available.

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

Service charter and business plan: a window into what we do and how

AHPRA recently launched two important pieces of work: our 2012-13 Business Plan and a Service Charter.

The *2012-13 Business Plan* sets out how AHPRA will focus its efforts and work with National Boards to protect the public and facilitate access to health services over the coming year.

For the past two years, AHPRA, the National Boards and their committees have worked closely together in a new regulatory environment to embed systems and processes that support the aims of the National Scheme. A lot of hard work and successful collaboration has given us a very solid foundation.

Over the coming year, AHPRA will focus on three key commitments: service, consistency and capability. The plan includes dozens of initiatives that support national consistency, improve the service experience of all stakeholders and the capabilities within AHPRA to meet our regulatory responsibilities.



The *Service Charter* sets out the values that guide AHPRA; the standards of service health practitioners, the public, employers and other stakeholders can expect; and the steps to be taken if these standards are not met.

AHPRA is committed to implementing processes that are nationally consistent and has set benchmarks in service that include access to knowledgeable staff who provide clear and accurate information in a timely manner.

The *Service Charter*, developed in consultation with health profession representatives, the community, National Boards and AHPRA staff, will be reviewed in 12 months.

Both documents are published in the About section of our website www.ahpra.gov.au

Registration renewals

Medical renewal on track

More than 80,000 medical practitioners with general and/or specialist or non-practising registration are due to renew their registration with the Medical Board of Australia by 30 September. At the time of writing more than 85% of practitioners have already renewed, more than 93% of them online. A further 4% of applications received are being assessed. Under the National Law, these practitioners remain registered while their application is assessed and processed.

This renewal period marks the first time medical practitioners have the option to 'opt out' of renewing their registration. Medical practitioners who don't want to renew their registration can go online to 'opt out'. This puts a stop to renewal reminders from AHPRA soon afterwards. AHPRA also stops sending reminder emails and letters to medical practitioners when it receives an application to renew.

This new online option will also provide the Board and AHPRA with better data on the number of medical practitioners who choose to opt out, to distinguish them from individuals who intend to renew, but do not do so on time.

Renewal applications received by AHPRA after 30 September will incur an additional late fee. We are expecting that only a small number of individuals will renew late, thanks to the support of key stakeholders as part of our renewals communications campaign, including government departments, employers and professional associations.

The results of the registration renewal process show the systematic benefits of national regulation in providing practitioners with a smooth and simple renewal experience. For further information, or to provide your feedback on the renewal process, please contact communications@ahpra.gov.au.

Nearly time to renew for newly regulated professions

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, medical radiation practitioners and occupational therapists will soon be due to renew their registration for the first time in the National Scheme.

As detailed in the last edition of *AHPRA Report* (June 2012), the safe and efficient transition of these four new professions to the National Scheme was a primary focus for the National Boards and AHPRA leading up to 1 July. More than 16,000 practitioners have now transitioned from an existing state or territory board, and more than 14,000 practitioners have registered for the first time.

Many of these practitioners are now due to renew their registration by 30 November 2012. Eventually, the annual registration renewal date for all these practitioners will be 30 November. However, because some practitioners have transitioned to the National Scheme from local boards with different renewal cycles, it will take some time for the renewal dates to align nationally.

If a practitioner is not sure if they have to renew, they should check their details and registration expiry date on the Register of Practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au. This is a record practitioners can trust. If a practitioner has to renew by 30 November, this will be the registration expiry date on their entry on the register.

AHPRA will also contact practitioners (by letter or email) when it is time for them to renew. This reminder is a confirmation that a practitioner can renew online. Renewing online is the fastest and easiest way to renew.

Renewals time

The four professions to join the National Scheme this year are not the only groups renewing their registration over the coming months. Chiropractic, dental, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, and psychology practitioners are also due to renew by 30 November 2012.

AHPRA will send email reminders to renew to all practitioners for whom we have an email address. Practitioners should look out for these email reminders to confirm that online registration renewal is open. Hardcopy letters reminding practitioners of their responsibility to renew will be sent to all practitioners who do not renew in response to email reminders.

Renewal applications received by AHPRA after 30 November will incur an additional late fee. If a practitioner



hasn't renewed by one month after 30 November 2012, their registration will lapse. This means a practitioner must apply again for registration and will not be able to practise their profession until their registration application has been finalised.

Practitioners are reminded that, renewing online is easy. Just make sure to do it on time.

Membership changes: National Boards and Agency Management Committee

National Boards

Changes to the membership of the 10 National Boards originally appointed in 2009 were announced by Australia's Commonwealth, state and territory health ministers with the appointment of 108 members to National Boards for terms of one to three years.

The appointments reflect the ministers' intention to balance stability with renewal in National Board membership. The appointments included 30 new appointments and 75 reappointments.

AHPRA, the Agency Management Committee and the National Boards are all deeply appreciative of the level of commitment shown by all inaugural Board members to bringing the National Scheme to life.

In particular, we thank Glenn Ruscoe, the inaugural Chair of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia and Jason Warnock, the inaugural Chair of the Podiatry Board of Australia, for their leadership and dedication over the past three years. They were tireless in working with their boards and AHPRA to build the foundations of national regulation.

Newly appointed National Board Chairs, Mr Paul Shinkfield as Chair of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia and Mrs Catherine Loughry, as Chair of the Podiatry Board of Australia, were welcomed into their roles from 30 August 2012.

Agency Management Committee

The membership of the AHPRA Agency Management committee was announced by Australia's health ministers in August.

The Agency Management Committee oversees AHPRA's work, including deciding policies. A focus for the Committee is on ensuring an effective and efficient partnership between AHPRA and the National Boards.

The Agency Management Committee's previous five members have been reappointed for various terms, and three new members were appointed. The appointment terms range from 12 months to three years, allowing for future staggered appointments to balance renewal with experience. All the appointments commenced on 3 September 2012.

AHPRA's Agency Management Committee reappointed members are:

- Mr Peter Allen: reappointed as Chair for 12 months
- Professor Genevieve Gray: reappointed for 12 months
- Professor Marilyn Walton: reappointed for two years
- Mr Michael Gorton AM: reappointed for three years, and
- Professor Constantine (Con) Michael AO: reappointed for three years

The three new appointments for the Committee are:

- Mr Ian Smith, Chief Executive of the Western Australia Country Health Service
- Ms Fran Thorn, former Secretary of the Department of Health Victoria, and
- Ms Karen Crawshaw, Deputy Director-General, New South Wales Health.

Stepping up community engagement

AHPRA and National Boards recently took the first steps in implementing their community engagement strategy by hosting a community forum in Perth, and a video briefing for remote sites.

The forum was attended by more than 50 people spanning the community health sector, health consumer groups and interested members of the public. The online briefing linked in community members from nine remote WA sites.

The forum provided an opportunity for AHPRA and members of national and state boards to meet members of the community to discuss issues related to health practitioner regulation and to learn where the community's interests lie.

AHPRA has since entered into a partnership with the Consumer Health Forum of Australia (CHF) to engage with health consumers and the broader community across Australia. The partnership aims to:

- raise community awareness of health practitioner regulation

- increase community access to information about health practitioner regulation
- facilitate community input into the development of standards, codes of practice, guidelines and policies for health practitioners and
- increase transparency, particularly in relation to the processes in place for managing notifications about registered health practitioners.

A series of community forums have been scheduled between October and December in states and territories around Australia, to provide an opportunity to brief community members on how health practitioner regulation works and what it offers the community. Feedback from the community at these forums will provide valuable information that will help shape future community and stakeholder engagement, presentation and delivery of information, and efforts to support increased transparency.

For further information, including a forum schedule flyer, please email communications@ahpra.gov.au

Consultations

International criminal history checks

AHPRA and the 14 National Boards are reviewing submissions to the recent consultation on international criminal history checks.

A consultation paper was published in June seeking feedback on options for refining international criminal history checks used by AHPRA and the Boards to assess applications for registration for the 14 regulated health professions. The consultation closed mid-August and AHPRA and the National Boards will keep stakeholders informed as a position develops. The original consultation paper is available under News on the AHPRA website www.ahpra.gov.au and submissions on the paper will also be published there soon.

Social media policy preliminary consultation

The National Boards plan to release a consultation paper on a social media policy later in 2012.

A preliminary draft of the social media policy was released to some stakeholders for initial feedback, ahead of a wider public release. The preliminary consultation process aims to 'road test' the initial draft to weigh operational impact,

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

issues or initial concerns. The Boards welcome the significant interest in the preliminary draft, especially on social media. National Boards are monitoring this feedback closely and will take the issues raised into account when refining the draft social media policy before it is released for public consultation on the National Boards' websites.

The Boards encourage feedback from registered health practitioners and members of the community when the public consultation on the draft policy opens in the next few months. The public consultation document will be published in the *News* section of the AHPRA website (www.ahpra.gov.au) and the National Boards websites, which are accessible via the AHPRA site.

Accreditation arrangements

A review of accreditation arrangements is underway for the 10 National Boards that entered the National Scheme in 2010.

Accreditation authorities play an important role in the National Scheme: recommending accreditation standards to National Boards for approval; and assessing programs of study and education providers to determine whether accreditation standards are being met. Their work helps to ensure that education providers and programs of study provide students with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes to practise their profession in Australia.

The National Health Practitioner Regulation Law, as in force in each state and territory, requires each National Board to have reviewed accreditation arrangements by 30 June 2013. The review includes an assessment of how existing authorities have performed, and consultation with stakeholders about accreditation functions.

Further information about the accreditation arrangements review, including a public consultation process, is now available on many National Board websites, which are accessible via the [AHPRA](http://www.ahpra.gov.au) site.



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Update to complaints handling policy and procedure

AHPRA has recently reviewed and republished its AHPRA Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure and revised its complaints form.

Our complaint handling processes are designed to ensure that the concerns of individual members of the public are treated seriously and are addressed promptly and fairly. Feedback from complaints can be an important source of information to improve our services.

The policy applies to complaints about:

- decisions by AHPRA, a Board or Committee, except the outcome of a notification about a practitioner or the application of a registration standard in relation to a practitioner, and
- the behaviour of an AHPRA staff member or a Board or Committee member.

The policy does not cover matters such as notifications about health practitioners. There is a different process for making a notification about a health practitioner. However, a complaint may be made about AHPRA or a Board's process in managing a notification.

Information about making a complaint to the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman is also contained in the Complaints Policy. The National Health Practitioner Ombudsman will usually only hear complaints that have already been lodged with AHPRA, and where we have been given a reasonable opportunity to resolve the complaint in line with the policy.

Update on practitioner standards audit

All health practitioners registered under the National Law are required to comply with a range of registration standards. The registration standards are developed by each Board after wide-ranging consultation and must be approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. All health practitioners must comply with the relevant registration standards for English language, criminal history, recency of practice, continuing professional development and professional indemnity insurance.

AHPRA is currently developing an auditing framework through a practitioner audit project. As part of this large program of work, a pilot was conducted with the pharmacy profession earlier this year. A second phase of the pilot is being run at renewal this year with the optometry, pharmacy and chiropractic professions. In conjunction with the National Boards for each of these professions, a steering committee will work to deliver a set of findings and recommendations that will be used to develop a robust auditing framework that can be used across all 14 National Boards. This will be developed through analysis of data and process information from the both phases of the pilot.

This second phase will begin in October 2012 and run for approximately three months. Practitioners will be randomly selected across these three professions when they apply to renew their registration for the 2012-13 period. This will apply to both paper and online renewal applications.

Those selected to participate will be audited for compliance against their Board's registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development. Feedback from the pilot will inform the set-up of the auditing framework for use by other National Boards from 2013/14. The timing of further rollout will be informed by the findings of the second phase of the audit.

Further information will be made available in the *Registration* section on the AHPRA website.

Online graduate registration

Students due to graduate as health practitioners at the end of 2012 will be able to go online from October to apply for registration early.

An online graduate registration service for final year students was launched by AHPRA in May 2011. The service enables students to apply for registration early before completing their course and aims to smooth the path from study to work in five simple steps.

Most students are able to complete their registration application online, while others use the dedicated web pages to be directed to the correct application form. All applications require students to return some supporting documents to AHPRA by mail.



AHPRA state and territory offices are implementing a comprehensive communications campaign to support our goal to achieve 90% of end of year graduates using the online graduate registration service in 2012.

AHPRA people: meet Anne Morrison

With more than 20 years of experience in health regulation in a career that first began as a registered nurse and midwife in Scotland, Anne Morrison brings a rich understanding of regulatory systems to the role of Queensland State Manager.

Anne's expertise in the evolving world of health regulation is combined with an enthusiasm to continually find improvements to how things work. It was the opportunity to work in the newly established National Registration and Accreditation Scheme that first brought her to AHPRA.

Anne joined AHPRA in March 2010 and was initially Executive Officer to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia before becoming Queensland State Manager in November 2010.

Having been involved in the initial consultation and planning for the National Scheme in a former role as chair of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC), Anne says that joining AHPRA was an opportunity to get involved in a model of regulation that is not replicated anywhere in the world.

Internationally, models of health regulation are always changing, evolving from early days of professional guilds, to autonomous bodies or government departments, to the development of bodies that support and work with the regulators themselves.

The National Scheme's inclusion of community members and its separation from government - while supporting links on issues of workforce policy - are some of the special features of Australia's regulatory scheme that are not common to all other regulatory systems.



'A big development under the National Scheme is the online publication of registers of practitioners. There have always been registers but they have not always been accessible to the public, which is a central consideration for a system acting in the public interest,' she says.

In addition, the registers are 'live', so only those practitioners who meet the standards set by National Boards and who are safe and competent to practise are on the registers. This differs from other systems where practitioners may have registered once only and remained on a list of practitioners for life.

Anne says that the pace of change can be one of the most demanding things about the work. The Queensland office - which is made up of more than 100 staff and provides services to the community and more than 99,000 Queensland based health practitioners - operates in a challenging and changing environment.

Anne says significant public events such as the recent report to the Crime and Misconduct Commission by retired Supreme Court Judge Mr Richard Chesterman, mean that professional regulation is under a spotlight in Queensland. Both the community and the profession are engaged with the system, making more notifications and more requests for information. »

« ‘Staff here have really been challenged in the past few years, not just by the transition to the National Scheme, but also the ongoing scrutiny of how they perform. As a result, the staff are fully committed, resilient and solution focused.’

Anne identifies working with the Queensland office staff as the best thing about the job and is proud of staff-led developments that have contributed to the National Scheme's work, including a number of application and assessment procedures.

Local teamwork has shaped the development of an operational plan that supports the local delivery of AHPRA's national business plan.

Before joining AHPRA, Anne was the Nursing and Health Policy Consultant to the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in Geneva. Before that Anne was Executive Officer of the Queensland Nursing Council, which included roles directing and coordinating nursing education, practice, conduct and registration programs.

Anne holds a Master of Business Administration (Queensland University of Technology), a Graduate Diploma in Management (QUT), a Bachelor of Educational Studies (University of Queensland), and a Bachelor of Science with Nursing (Dundee College of Technology, Scotland).

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 password 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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