

Professions Reference Group Communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) National office in Melbourne on 31 May 2018.

The meeting was Chaired by PRG Ms Julie Reeves from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

AHPRA Update

AHPRA CEO, Mr Martin Fletcher, updated members on various matters, including the following.

- Ministers have approved the Registration Standards for paramedicine, which have been published on the Paramedicine Board of Australia website.
- Tranche 1 amendments to the National Law have been passed in all states and territories.
- Tranche 1A amendments, including mandatory reporting requirements, will be released for consultation by Ministers soon.
- In May, the COAG Health Council released a [communiqué](#) advising of the appointment of Richelle McCausland as the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner (NHPOPC)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders, AHPRA, National Boards and accreditation authorities are finalising the *National Scheme Statement of Intent*. The statement is a commitment to close the gap on health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians, which will be released soon. Members discussed potential future opportunities to make a collective contribution in this space.

Regulatory operations update

AHPRA Executive Director Regulatory Operations, Ms Kym Ayscough, updated members on a number of matters, including on AHPRA's thinking on how to organise teams and workflows to drive consistency and develop expertise in each area.

Independent research on vexatious reporting

AHPRA commissioned independent research from the University of Melbourne to help quantify the number of vexatious complaints. A report was published in April which found the number of vexatious complaints to be very low, around 1 per cent. Vexatious complaints have a big effect on everyone involved, but the report also found the risk of someone not reporting their concerns is greater than if a complaint turns out to be vexatious. It's important to note that a finding of No Further Action (NFA) does not mean the complaint was unfounded or made in bad faith.

Update on advertising

AHPRA has launched a testimonial self-assessment tool and more profession-specific guidance as well as new resources to help practitioners meet their advertising obligations. Testimonials relating to a clinical aspect of care are not allowed in advertising for regulated health services.

The *Guidelines for advertising regulated health services*, as part of the regular review cycle, will be reviewed in coming months to see how well it is meeting its objectives, assess the relevance and clarity of definitions, incorporate any relevant new data/policy/legislation and help maintain internal consistency with other relevant documents. The guidelines will be released for public consultation as part of the review process.

AHPRA noted that the vast majority of health practitioners who are contacted about their advertising comply when they receive the first letter.

Proposed professional performance framework for the Medical Board of Australia

Dr Joanne Katsoris, AHPRA Executive Officer Medicine, updated the group on the proposed Medical Board of Australia's Professional Performance Framework, which is a systematic approach to ensure that all registered medical practitioners in Australia practise competently and ethically throughout their working lives and provide safe care to patients. The proposed framework has progressed over five years, including commissioning research by Plymouth University in to potential models.

The proposed framework has five pillars: strengthened continuing professional development (CPD), active assurance of safe practice, strengthened assessment and management of practitioners with multiple substantiated complaints, guidance to support practitioners, an collaborations to foster a positive culture.

Accreditation subcommittee of the AHPRA Agency Management Committee (AManC)

The AManC accreditation subcommittee is chaired by Mr Michael Gorton AM, who is also Chair of the AManC. The committee has had one meeting so far: they have looked at the responses to the accreditation assignment consultation at a thematic level and consider advice they want to include to National Boards regarding assignment provisions.

Business services update

AHPRA Executive Director Ms Sarndrah Horsfall updated members on potential changes to the Register of practitioners. The purpose of the public national register is to keep the public safe by allowing customers to check that a practitioner is registered, and to inform consumers about health service providers about the standard of practice achieved by registered practitioners with different types of registration by confirming a practitioner's qualifications. Members discussed AHPRA's *Be Safe in the Knowledge* campaign, which promoted consumers using the register to check whether their health practitioner is registered.

The group discussed how patients and consumers may use the register and what other features it could potentially include. A demonstration was given on what an updated AHPRA register could look like.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the PRG will be on 15 August 2018.

Julie Reeves

Chair

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