

Professions Reference Group Communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) National office in Melbourne on Wednesday 21 August 2019.

The meeting was chaired by Julie Reeves from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

Ahpra update

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

- Health Ministers have announced the appointment of Ms Gill Callister as the new Chair of the Agency Management Committee from July 2019. Ms Callister brings to the AManC her expertise in education and training. Ms Callister is an Associate Dean at the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and has dedicated her career to improving public policy and service delivery. She served as Secretary of the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) and was Secretary of the Victorian Department of Human Services (2009-2014), where she led policy, legislative and service delivery.

Members Dr Peggy Brown AO and Adjunct Professor Karen Crawshaw PSM were also reappointed for a period of three years.

- Ahpra and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (the Commission) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in their continuing efforts to better protect older Australians. The MoU ensures that there is a clear understanding of each agency's complementary roles and how information can be appropriately shared between them where there may be concerns in aged care. Janet Anderson, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner will be invited to the next PRG meeting to meet members and have a dialogue about current issues.
- Continuing collaboration with the NDIS Quality and Safety Commission (NDISQSC) is underway with a workshop scheduled in September 2019 to progress the development of MoU between both agencies.
- Ahpra has signed new five-year accreditation agreements with ten Accreditation Councils beginning 1 July 2019. The new agreements include clearer statements of performance, accountability and transparency principle and provide a contemporary framework that addresses key issues such as cultural safety, safety and quality, reducing regulatory burden, and multi-profession collaboration to meet the evolving healthcare needs of Australians.

The response to the Accreditation Systems Review final report is scheduled for Health Ministers consideration in November this year.

Regulatory operations update

Ahpra Executive Director, Regulatory Operations Kym Ayscough provided an update to members.

- Movement to a national operating model for all regulatory functions continues. The move to a national registration team in September 2018 has affected registration timeframes. Steps have been taken to increase resources, to identify and remove bottlenecks. The intention is to get ahead of the next application/renewal wave by working through the backlog on renewals and outstanding applications before the next peak comes in October.
- In Notifications, performance highlights include:
 - 14 per cent increase in notifications received
 - 25 per cent increase in notifications closed
 - 12 per cent decrease in notifications open
 - decrease in both number and proportion of notifications open longer than 12 months, and
 - 22 per cent more tribunal matters completed.

- Discussion occurred about advertising issues highlighted by members.

Graduate registration campaign

Ahpra National Director, Registration Catherine Miedecke provided the following update.

- Planning for the graduate registration campaign is currently underway with increased resources and improved communications. Communications materials in development contain an overview of the graduate registration process for new applicants, English language requirements and frequently asked questions.

Proposed supervised practice framework

Ahpra National Director, Policy and Accreditation Helen Townley and Strategic Policy Coordinator, Professional Standards Jane Motley shared information with members.

- A multi-profession review of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice, Chinese Medicine, Chiropractic, Dental, Medical, Medical Radiation Practice, Nursing and Midwifery, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathy, Paramedicine, Physiotherapy and Podiatry Boards of Australia current supervision guidelines has taken place and consultation will be underway in the coming months on the proposed *Supervised practice framework* to replace them. This will be supported by fact sheets, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and template supervised practice plan and report.
- The framework reflects a risk-based approach e.g. the risks of each matter will be assessed to inform the level of supervision and the reporting requirements. The structure of the proposed framework together with the supporting documents aims to improve the clarity and readability of the content.
- It is planned that public consultation will take place in September or October 2019 for an eight-week period. During this time there will also be targeted testing with internal and external stakeholders.

Cosmetic procedures: Consumer focused information

National Director, Policy and Accreditation Helen Townley and Strategic Policy Coordinator Luisa Interligi informed members of the following.

- Following previous discussions with advisory groups and other regulators about the importance of a multifaceted approach to informing the public about cosmetic procedures, Ahpra and the National Boards have developed a draft content for consumers about the risks of cosmetic procedures and surgery. Ahpra sought feedback on the draft content from members.

Mandatory notification campaign

Ahpra National Director, Government Relations Nick Lord updated members on the progress of preparation for changes to mandatory notification requirements.

- The preliminary consultation phase on the proposed revision to the National Board mandatory guidelines has been carried out which will be followed by a public consultation.
- Following from the working group's last meeting, two main messages are the focus of the supporting awareness work and materials that are in development:
 - encouraging health practitioners to seek help if/when needed, and
 - helping practitioners understand their mandatory notification obligations.
- Feedback was sought on how best to disseminate these messages and supporting materials. The sub-group of PRG is expected to next meet in September/October to test and progress the draft material further.

Consultation on cultural safety

Ahpra National Director, Communications Anita Rivera provided an update.

- PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting Pty Limited (PwC's Indigenous Consulting) in partnership with Griffith University First Peoples Health Unit has been chosen to deliver cultural safety training for Australia's regulators of registered health practitioners. The training schedule is expected to start from the end of 2019 to reach an estimated 1,600 AHPRA staff, statutory appointees and decision-making committees. AHPRA will evaluate the progress of the training program over time and explore an accessible mode for professions.
- The recent public consultation on cultural safety definition has concluded and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group and the National Forum of Chairs have been working together to develop a short and long form definition which will be used as a baseline for the National Scheme.

Engagement strategy

Ahpra National Director, Communications Anita Rivera and National Engagement Advisor Susan Biggar shared updates with members.

- Ahpra and the National Boards are working to further our engagement strategy framework. The aim of an engagement framework is to bring clarity and unity to Ahpra's overall aims for engagement with key stakeholders, why we engage with different stakeholders, how we do it and who does what.
- Members viewed the second practitioner experience video titled [Putting it in perspective: a practitioner's notification experience](#) which provides a first-hand account of the notification process from a practitioner's perspective. Ms Biggar shared lessons learned from previous videos highlighting a need for more careful messaging, emphasis on being more helpful and changing the conversation to move away from the stigma or fear of a notification.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the PRG will be on 28 November 2019.

Julie Reeves

Chair
Professions Reference Group