

## Communiqué: Chinese Medicine Reference Group meeting 2023

**The annual meeting of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the Board) with the Chinese Medicine Reference Group was held on 15 August 2023.**

The Board considers regular information exchange with the Reference Group is an essential component of its communication and engagement strategy. It is expected that such meetings will further strengthen constructive relationships with the Board's key stakeholders to assist the Board in delivering its regulatory outcomes in an engaging, effective and efficient manner. In addition, such meetings also provide an opportunity to share information and explore issues/matters of mutual interest and respond respectfully, collaboratively and proactively.

[The Chinese Medicine Reference Group](#) (the Reference Group) is convened by the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia in order to:

- provide a forum for discussion of matters related to the registration and regulation of Chinese medicine practitioners and accreditation of Chinese medicine programs under the National Registration and Accreditation scheme (the National scheme)
- foster communication and a common understanding between the different participants within the reference group in relation to the work of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (the Board), the work of participants in the Reference Group and the broader function of the National Scheme, and
- to assist the Board in progressing its core business.

The Board welcomed representatives from all the major Chinese medicine professional associations, education providers, individual practitioners, insurance company representatives and community consumer representatives. In total we had 30 participants at this meeting.



Virtual attendance (not pictured) Waveny Holland, President, AACMA and Paul Stadhams, CEO, AACMA

## 1. Welcome by the Chair

All members were welcomed to the meeting.

### 1.1 Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

Professor Lim, Chair of the Board, acknowledged the traditional custodians of the lands from where participants attended the meeting and paid respects to Elders past and present and emerging.

### 1.2 Introduction to the Board and staff

Following introductions of [Board members](#), the Chair also introduced the Ahpra staff who support the work of the Board.

## 2. Presentation – Chinese Medicine Board of Australia – Update from the Board

### 2.1 Key statistics

The Chair presented a number of key statistics to attendees, including:

- registration type by principal place of practice (as of June 2023),
- registrations by divisions and principal place of practice (as of June 2023), and
- the number of students in approved Chinese Medicine programs (as of June 2021).

### 2.2 The role of the Reference group

Attendees were reminded about the role of the Reference group which provides an opportunity for members to raise and report on any issues of interest and/or concern that may assist the Board in progressing its core business.

### 2.3 Update on the Board's work plan

The Board held its annual planning day in March and has set its strategic goals for 2023/2024.

The Chair provided an update on the areas of focus on the Board's work plan:

- Regulatory examinations
- Guideline reviews currently underway:
  - Safe Chinese herbal medicine practice
    - The guideline will be published on the Board's website on 1 September 2023 and will come into effect on 1 December 2023.
  - Infection prevention and control for acupuncture practice
    - The guideline will be published on the Board's website on 1 September 2023 and will come into effect on 1 December 2023
  - Patient Health Records Guideline - review
    - A review of this guideline has commenced, and preliminary consultation with key stakeholders is expected to occur in 2023.
- The Board continues to engage with practitioners and students through:
  - newsletters,
  - webinars, and
  - presentations

In addition to continuing our current areas of focus, the Board has a number of new initiatives and will commence work on in 2023/2024 including developing telehealth guidance for Chinese medicine practitioners and a public education campaign aimed at increasing the public confidence in the profession.

### 2.4 Committees of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

The Chair with assistance from Luke Hubbard, Board practitioner member and Bing Tian, Board practitioner member provided an overview of the [Board's Committees](#).

- There are four Committees who are appointed by the Board to undertake work on behalf of the Board.
  - The Accreditation Committee
  - The Examinations Committee
  - The Policy, Planning and Communications Committee (PPCC)
  - The Registrations and Notifications Committee (RNC)

## **2.5 Board Communications and engagement**

In 2023 the Board visited education providers in Sydney and Melbourne, these included:

- Endeavour College of Natural Health Sydney
- Western Sydney University
- Sydney Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine
- NICM Health Research Institute
- RMIT University
- Torrens University

The Board also met with representatives of the Chinese Medicine Council of NSW the day before the reference group meeting and discussed matters of mutual interest.

## **3. Presentation from the Therapeutic Goods Administration**

Attendees received an overview from Dr Cheryl McRae, Branch Head Complementary and Over-the Counter Medicines, Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) about how the TGA safeguards and enhances the health of the Australian community through effective and timely regulation of therapeutic goods.

More information about how the TGA is responsible for regulating the supply, import, export, manufacturing and advertising of therapeutic goods can be found at the [TGA website](#).

## **Matters referred to the CMBA for discussion by the Reference Group**

### **4. Presentation – Cultural Safety**

Attendees received a presentation from Stephanie Campbell, Board Community Member, on the Code of conduct and the Board's expectation that Chinese medicine practitioners ensure safe and respectful practice which requires ongoing critical reflection of knowledge, skills, attributes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe and accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

Attendees engaged in a robust discussion and representatives from the Professional Associations also raised the potential for the development of education and resources to encompass opportunities for Continuing professional development (CPD).

### **5. Presentation – Review of the Patient Health Record Guidelines**

Attendees were provided with an overview of the proposed changes to the Patient records health guideline by Luke Hubbard, practitioner member of the Board.

More information about the proposed changes will be provided via consultation to key stakeholders later in 2023.

### **6. Presentation – Sustainability of the Profession**

The Chair and Dina Tsiopelas, practitioner member of the Board reiterated some of the discussion points from earlier in the day and also highlighted some key points.

- Public awareness campaign
  - As part of its workplan the Board are initiating a public information campaign to increase public confidence in the regulation of health practitioners. The campaign is intended to deliver relevant and user-friendly information targeted to the public about what to expect and how to recognise safe and effective Chinese medicine services.
- Engagement with education providers and students
  - The Board will consolidate on its visit to education providers by offering a webinar to all final year students to help them understand what they need to know and do to get registered. In addition, the Board will hold a separate webinar for first year students to welcome to the profession and a career in Chinese medicine for the first time.

- Trans-Tasman mutual recognition with New Zealand (TTMR)
  - The Chair provided an overview of the recent establishment of the [Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand](#). Applications for registration in New Zealand are now open.
  - Chinese medicine practitioners who have current registration and an Annual practising certificate as a Chinese medicine practitioner in New Zealand can apply for registration as a Chinese medicine practitioner in Australia under the Commonwealth Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997. The division(s) applied for in Australia must correspond with the type of registration held in New Zealand.
  - The Chinese medicine divisions applied for must correspond to the type or scope of practice of registration held in New Zealand.
  - The scopes in NZ relevant to registration in Australia are:
    - Chinese medicine practitioner (acupuncturist)
    - Chinese herbal medicine practitioner
  - There are no equivalent registration divisions in Australia for the following scopes of practice in New Zealand:
    - Chinese medicine practitioner - Specialist.
    - Chinese massage (Tiuna) practitioner; and
    - Chinese Medicine Practitioner – Special Purpose

## 7. Discussion – Sustainability of the Profession

Attendees were provided with an opportunity to provide feedback about how organisations can take action to increase public awareness of the profession, how to support sustainability initiatives and what issues the Board should be aware of in its role in protecting the public.

- Feedback provided by the group discussions included:
  - A need to focus on campaigns that highlights the benefits of Chinese medicine and acupuncture
  - Combined advocacy from Professional Associations to highlight issues impacting the profession
  - Integration of the profession into the primary care model
  - Keeping practitioners in the profession (current average is 15 years)

The Chair thanked attendees for the feedback and acknowledged the importance of receiving their input and perspective on issues impacting the profession. The Chair reiterated the importance of raising public awareness for the Chinese Medicine profession and embracing opportunities to integrate Chinese Medicine into the primary care model and Australian Healthcare context overall.

## 8. Meeting review and future planning

It was agreed that these meetings were useful and informative.

## 9. Next meeting

To be advised