

AHPRA Report Edition 3, July 2011

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the third edition of *AHPRA Report!* This is our regular update to everyone interested in the work of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

July 1 marked the first anniversary of the start of AHPRA and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). Looking back, I am proud of the distance AHPRA has travelled. Our processes are all vastly more robust; our people have settled into new roles and become familiar with new systems and new legislation; and our service to practitioners and the community has dramatically improved. This was demonstrated in practice by the success of the recent registration renewal period for close to 320,000 health practitioners in May and June. Quietly, the benefits of national registration are progressively being realised.

Now that our first year has clicked over, we are carefully analysing data on the first year of notifications received by AHPRA, on behalf of National Boards. Notifications are reports to the Boards on issues about the possible unprofessional conduct, unsatisfactory professional performance or impairment of health of registered health practitioners. We know that there is considerable interest in the first year experience under the National Law and we will be reporting more fully on this in our Annual Report.

As ever, AHPRA is looking forward. Our focus now is on medical registration renewal – due for most medical practitioners with general and/or specialist, provisional or non-practising registration by 30 September 2011. AHPRA will be sending several email and mail reminders to individual practitioners and working with our partners to implement a comprehensive communications campaign.



We will be encouraging all medical practitioners who are due to renew – to **renew online, on time!**

AHPRA is also finalising work on the medical Specialists Register – and is timing this to make sure that the process involved does not interfere with this year's registration renewal process for most doctors in Australia. Before July 2010, a medical Specialists Register existed only in Queensland, South Australia, West Australia and the ACT. The National Scheme has enabled a national Specialists Register to be established for the first time. It will help the community recognise the expert status of medical practitioners eligible for specialist registration.

Establishing the medical Specialists Register is a complex and multi-step process. It has involved bringing together initial information about practitioners' specialty and fields of specialty practice from a number of sources. This included information from the previous four medical boards that registered specialists, Medicare Australia, the specialist colleges and the information some practitioners provided to AHPRA in the early months of the National Scheme.

The fact that the medical Specialists Register was built from data from a number of sources means that initial flaws in the data are inevitable. AHPRA is therefore seeking the assistance of the medical profession to ensure the quality and completeness of the information published. »

We will be writing to individual practitioners **after** they have renewed their registration for the 2012 year. Queensland medical practitioners are the first cabs off the rank and will receive their letters in July / August, while a mail-out to medical practitioners in other states and territories will start in October, after they have renewed. A briefing note on the Specialists Register is published on [the Medical Board of Australia website](#). The Board's registration standard on specialist registration and a list of specialties, fields of practice and titles recognised by the Australian Medical Council are published at [the Medical Board website](#).

Another big area of focus in the coming year is development of a nationally-consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards (criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development). AHPRA is working with the National Boards to build a framework for auditing compliance that meets relevant legislative requirements, sets the scope and terms of reference for the audit, determines frequency, size and type of audits and establishes a methodology and process for reporting on

findings. National Boards will be communicating widely with practitioners and the professions as the approach is further developed. There will be a pilot of the audit framework with some professions, prior to the framework being in place for all professions by mid-2012.

Accreditation is a cornerstone of the National Scheme. AHPRA is pleased to be working closely with National Boards, the [Forum of Health Professions Councils](#) and individual accreditation authorities to optimise health practitioner education and training. More detail on early progress is included in this edition of [AHPRA Report](#).

Internally, AHPRA has started work to develop an enterprise agreement that aims to build unity, clarity and consistency for our staff and organisation. Our staff came from 37 different organisations to join AHPRA and currently work under many different industrial agreements across all states and territories. AHPRA is working with our staff and their representatives throughout the enterprise bargaining process.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

Renewal and registration snapshot: May – June campaign a success

The recent renewal of registration of close to 320,000 health practitioners in May and June has gone very smoothly, with up to 98% of practitioners renewing on time. Around 80% of practitioners used the option of online renewal. We are continuing to encourage the uptake of online renewal wherever possible.

The renewal process was a significant test of AHPRA systems as it represents the biggest simultaneous health practitioner registration renewal ever undertaken in Australia. AHPRA has ramped up its communications with individual registrants by introducing multiple email reminders and implementing an extensive communications campaign with stakeholders. During June, our customer service teams in each state and territory office responded to more than 50,000 phone calls, 14,000 email enquiries and nearly 3000 counter enquiries.



Most of the practitioners due to renew in May and June were nurses and midwives around Australia. Smaller numbers of other health practitioners in some states and territories were also due to renew for periods longer or shorter than 12 months, to align their renewal period with the new national registration renewal dates.

One in every 44 Australians is a registered health practitioner with the National Scheme.

[Click here](#) for more information.

AHPRA welcomes 2012 professions

From 1 July 2012, four new professions will be regulated as part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme as follows:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice
- Chinese medicine (acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Chinese herbal dispensing)
- medical radiation practice (diagnostic radiography, nuclear medicine technology, radiation therapy) and
- occupational therapy.

AHPRA and the 10 National Boards currently in the National Scheme, welcomed the recent announcement by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) of the 39 new Board members who will become the national regulators for these new professions.

The four new National Boards will immediately begin important preparatory work to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, medical radiation practitioners and occupational therapists to join the National Scheme. This work will include:

- developing and consulting on mandatory registration standards and any other necessary instruments to support the registration of eligible practitioners commencing national registration by 1 July 2012

- implementing the transition from State and Territory registration to national registration for the four professions who are regulated locally
- commencing registration of practitioners for the four professions in States and Territories where they are not currently regulated and
- deciding whether to appoint an external body or establish an accreditation committee to undertake the accreditation functions for their professions under the National Scheme.

AHPRA Management Committee Chair, Mr Peter Allen, congratulated the individual Board members and commended their commitment to their professions and to protecting the Australian public.

“The members of the four new National Boards will be responsible for setting the professional standards, registering practitioners and investigating notifications under the National Scheme – and in doing so helping Australians access safe and competent practitioners in these professions,” said Mr Allen.

For further information, contact the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme 2012 project team on contact@nras2012.ahpra.gov.au.

Registration certificates: online copies

Australia's health practitioners can now print a copy of their Certificate of Registration in a new online service launched by AHPRA in July.

The new service was developed in response to practitioner feedback. Since the service launched three weeks ago, more than 2000 health practitioners have gone online to print a copy of their certificate. This new service complements the hard copy Certificate of Registration which AHPRA continues to mail to all health practitioners when they renew their registration each year.

The health practitioner information on the Certificate of Registration copy is taken directly from the National Register of health practitioners at the time of printing the certificate and records the date it was printed. The printed certificate of registration is clearly labelled as a copy produced from the National Register. The certificate also directs users to the online public register for the most up-to-date registration information.

The National Register remains the ultimate, real-time source of registration information about all registered practitioners. Health practitioners and community members can check their details on the National Register by following the link on the AHPRA website and using their name and profession to search the Register.



Employers should always refer to the online National Register to access the most up-to-date information about practitioners who are registered to practise in Australia. A subscription service for employers to bulk-check employee registration is available on the AHPRA website.

Online copies of certificates adds to an increasing range of online services available to practitioners under the National Scheme, including the ability to update contact details and to check that their application to renew registration has been received by AHPRA, so they can continue to practise while their application is processed.

All of these services, and the ability to print a copy of their Certificate of Registration, are accessed by practitioners using their unique User ID and password provided by AHPRA.

Collaboration the cornerstone of accreditation in National Scheme

Collaboration, clear roles and accountabilities and a joint commitment to best practice will underpin the accreditation of health practitioner education and training under the National Scheme.

In a significant second meeting, AHPRA, the Chairs of the 10 National Boards and the Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils (the Forum) met in June to discuss how to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of health profession accreditation and promote cross-profession learning.

The meeting addressed issues common to accreditation across the 10 professions including:

- ensuring the objectives and principles of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory apply to national accreditation functions

- clarifying roles, responsibilities and information flow between AHPRA, the National Boards and accreditation authorities, reporting arrangements, and procedures for the development of accreditation standards and
- discussing a proposed Quality Framework for accreditation functions. All partners are keen to work towards best practice in delivery of accreditation functions and the Quality Framework will underpin this ongoing work.

Documents from the meeting are being developed into a reference on accreditation under the National Law which AHPRA and the Forum will publish on their websites as a resource for ongoing collaboration.

For further information, contact:

- AHPRA Helen Townley, Executive Officer Policy, helen.townley@ahpra.gov.au
- Forum of Australian Health Professions Councils, Peggy Sanders, Senior Executive Officer, info@healthprofessionscouncils.org.au

AHPRA people

Meet Robyn Collins, AHPRA's WA office chief

Adjunct Associate Professor Robyn Collins, State Manager, AHPRA Western Australia, described the introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme as “a unique opportunity to show the world how a national regulation system of 10 different health professions can actually work.

“We should never underestimate the scope and magnitude of the strategic vision we are successfully realising,” Robyn said.

While the National Scheme began on 1 July 2010 in other states and territories, Western Australia joined on 18 October 2010, after some local legislative amendments – a situation which Robyn said was both advantageous and challenging.

“It was an odd feeling not being an ‘official’ part of the team on 1 July 2010 – although when we did join, it was relatively seamless and we felt that we had never been on the outside.

“We also had the advantage of carrying out extensive staff training, learning from the lessons of our colleagues in other states and territories. I cannot adequately express my sincere appreciation to my state and territory manager colleagues who were always available for a word of advice. It is this collegiality which has cemented a solid foundation of a positive team spirit throughout AHPRA.”



Robyn paid tribute to her staff and the outstanding work her team has accomplished.

“We were very fortunate in that all staff who were eligible to transfer from previous Boards to AHPRA did so. You cannot underestimate the value of the corporate knowledge that our people have brought to the organisation. I am often heard to say ‘I am only as good as the people I work with and our people are exceptional’.

“Each day our staff demonstrate unqualified commitment to the National Scheme; an essential ingredient that ultimately protects the public – which is what we are here for.

“For example, in the transition of notification cases we’re managing in an environment where we have 10 different pieces of different legislation to work with. To have staff familiar with these pieces of legislation is invaluable.” »

The WA office has around 72 full-time equivalent staff members, covering the areas of executive, notifications, registrations, corporate and finance, regulation and policy, and Board services.

Four Boards and seven committees are currently supported by the WA office. The Northern Territory has recently amalgamated with the South Australia and Western Australia Board of the Psychology Board of Australia. Along with these structures, under the National Law there are several committees supporting both registration and notification matters.

Western Australia has introduced some successful initiatives such as the creation of a paperless office environment. This has informed a wider strategy that

AHPRA is currently piloting to use electronic document systems to support Boards, wherever possible.

Robyn has many years of experience in senior health care management and clinical positions. Most recently, she was the Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of the Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia. Robyn is an inaugural member of the School of Nursing & Midwifery Board at Curtin University of Technology. In recognition of her leadership skills, Robyn was awarded an Adjunct Associate Professor Award by Curtin University for leadership in Nursing and Midwifery, and in 2008 she received the Women's Hospitals Australasia Medal of Distinction.

[Click here](#) to learn more about AHPRA state and territory managers

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.



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Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

State and Territory offices

AHPRA has an office in each capital city. [Contact details](#) are published on our website.

Publications and other information

National Boards produce registration standards, along with guidance and advice that expand on these standards, to support your 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.

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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