

Communiqué

September 2017 meeting of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

The 87th meeting of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 29 September 2017 in the Darwin office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) office in Melbourne.

This communiqué outlines the issues and decisions from this meeting, and other points of interest.

We publish this communiqué on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

Physiotherapists treating animals

Last month the Board reminded physiotherapists that the National Law¹ aims to protect the health and safety of the Australian public. This does not extend to animals. Practising on animals, using the protected title of 'physiotherapist' or 'physical therapist' in relation to animal practice, can have serious implications for your registration.

If your practice is 100% animal-based, you cannot maintain general registration because you cannot meet the requirements for recent practice. The recency of practice requirements are 150 hours of practice in the previous registration year, or 450 hours over the previous three years – on humans.

'Practice' can be any role, whether paid or not, in which you use your skills and knowledge as a physiotherapist. Practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It can include working in a direct non-clinical relationship with patients, working in management, administration, education research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on the safe, effective delivery of physiotherapy services to the public.

Your options in this situation are to apply for non-practising registration, or surrender your registration.

If you practise on animals, whether as part of the normal course of your practice, on weekends, or without payment, you must:

- Meet your professional obligations as a registered physiotherapist – including Continuing Professional Development (CPD), recent practice (on humans), and adhere to the Code of conduct.
- Know and adhere to laws in any state or territory in which you practise that restrict or prohibit the provision of health services to animals. A breach of any law may risk an investigation into your conduct and/or be considered as an issue that goes to your fitness for registration.
- If you use the protected title of either 'physiotherapist' or 'physical therapist' and give the impression that you are an animal physiotherapist, a vet or something other than a human physiotherapist, you may breach the statutory requirements of the National Law.
- The title 'Animal physiotherapist' may lead members of the public to assume that the Board also has jurisdiction over the treatment of animals. That is not the case.
- Make sure that you do not give the impression that you are a registered veterinarian.

¹ The Health Practitioner National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Animal owners are not able to notify the Board about issues they may have about the treatment of an animal, as they would if the treatment had been provided to a human.

If you practice on animals, does your professional indemnity insurer know? Are you covered?

It's true that your CPD requirements must relate to your chosen scope of practice and some of your chosen scope of practice may be on animals. However, the National Law, which is the legislation you are registered under, relates to humans only, you must have CPD relating to your practice on humans, not animals, and you must meet the recency of practice requirements mentioned before – 150 hours in the previous registration year or 450 hours in the previous three years.

There are many other state and territory laws, including those relating the provision of services to animals that you must adhere to, as well.

Even if you have formal qualifications relating to the treatment of animals, your obligations as a registered physiotherapist relate to humans, and not animals.

You must declare at each renewal that you have met the Board's registration standards, including:

- Recent practice minimum requirements: 150 hours over the previous registration year, or 450 hours over the previous three years – on humans.
- CPD minimum requirements: 20 hours.

For more information on your obligations and registration requirements go to the Board's website at www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au.

The Board will shortly be publishing frequently asked questions to provide practitioners and others with further information.

Registration fees for 2017-18

The Board has frozen the registration fee for 2018 at \$110. It will cover the registration period for most practitioners of 1 December 2017 to 30 November 2018. A [full fee schedule](#), is published on the Board's website.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) is funded by practitioners' registration fees. The decision to keep the fee frozen ensures practitioners are not unduly burdened, but still provides sufficient income to allow the Board to carry out its function under the National Law and its duty to protect the public

Graduating soon?

Are you a physiotherapy student and graduating soon? Are you grappling with assignments, exams and starting to apply for your first job in the profession? The Board has launched a [short animation](#) just for you.

The video aims to raise awareness among physiotherapy students and new graduates about the important role registering with the Board plays in providing safe and ethical care to patients.

Before a physiotherapy graduate enters the world of work they must register with the Board. There is only one registration Board that covers all of Australia. The Board has developed this video to help graduates understand what they need to know about becoming a registered physiotherapist.

The video also talks about the codes, policies and guidelines graduates will need to know throughout their career. These will help them provide safer care to patients.

The Board launched the video at a stakeholder forum held in Darwin this week and has released the video to coincide with the Board's awareness campaign for students who are graduating at the end of 2017 and will soon be seeking general registration as a physiotherapist.

Students due to complete [approved programs of study](#) at the end of 2017 are invited to apply for registration online four to six weeks before finishing their course and after Monday 9 October. We are

updating our online application form to help make registration easier for students applying for registration, so if you can, wait to apply until after Monday 9 October.

The animation aims to explain their obligations when becoming registered physiotherapist, why though they have completed their education and training that they still need to participate in continuous professional development and meet other registration standards. It sets out what it means to be part of a regulated profession which abides by a *Code of Conduct*.

Stakeholder breakfast meeting – Darwin

The Board held its first stakeholder engagement session in Darwin in the morning prior to its meeting. The breakfast session was well received and well attended by local physiotherapists, allied health leaders and other stakeholders.

The Acting Manager of the AHPRA Darwin office gave those in attendance an outline of Northern Territory-specific issues and then gave a presentation on the obligations of registered physiotherapists and requested input into the forthcoming review of the Board's shared *Code of conduct*.

The stakeholder breakfast also provided the Board with the opportunity to launch its new [graduate video](#), now available on the Board's website.

Legislative changes passed to establish a new National Board for paramedicine and provide stronger protection for the public

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 has been passed by the Queensland Parliament and has received royal assent. This Bill contains amendments to the National Law that will apply in all States and Territories except Western Australia (South Australia also needs to make a regulation to give effect to the amendments). The Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia has also passed a corresponding amendment Bill (the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) Amendment Bill 2017*) which will now be considered by the Legislative Council.

The passing of the Bill in Queensland marks a significant day for health practitioner regulation as these are the first legislative amendments to the National Law since the start of the National Scheme in 2010.

The changes to the National Law will enable the Paramedicine Board of Australia to be established with the appointment of inaugural board members by Health Ministers in the near future. Also, new measures that strengthen public protection will be introduced and there will be formal recognition of nursing and midwifery as two separate professions regulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA).

To find out what the amendments include read the [news item](#) on the AHPRA website.

Decisions about proposed amendments to the National Law are made by Health Ministers and the governments of all States and Territories, with the changes progressed through the Queensland Parliament (as the host jurisdiction of the National Law), and the Western Australian Parliament. AHPRA will work with National Boards, governments, health departments, professions and consumer representatives to support the implementation of the changes to the National Law into daily operations.

While the Queensland Bill has received royal assent, commencement of many of the changes to the National Law are likely to occur in a staggered process over the coming months.

The Health Practitioner Regulation and National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2017 as passed by the Queensland Parliament can be accessed the [Queensland parliament website](#).

More information on the regulation of paramedics under the National Scheme can be accessed on the [AHPRA website](#).

Are your contact details up-to-date?

It is important your contact details are up-to-date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the [Login icon](#) at the top right of the AHPRA website. Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

Follow AHPRA on social media

Connect with AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) to receive information about important topics for your profession and participate in the discussion.



Further information

We publish a range of information about registration and our expectations of registered physiotherapists on our website at www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more information or help with questions about your registration, please send a web enquiry form or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Charles Flynn

Chair

6 October 2017