



Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander health practice
Chinese medicine
Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Medical radiation practice
Nursing and Midwifery

Occupational therapy
Optometry
Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

AHPRA REPORT

AHPRA Report Edition 11, January 2013

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A message from the CEO

Welcome to the first edition of AHPRA Report for 2013!

The past year was a busy one. Among many highlights of 2012, staff across all AHPRA offices worked to deliver on a range of fronts including:

- the smooth entry of four new professions into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
- smoother and better registration and renewal processes and systems, and increased consistency in how we manage notifications
- building effective working relationships with Boards and their committees
- establishing a solid framework for auditing practitioners' compliance with registration requirements
- greater transparency in what we do, and how we do it, and
- making it easier for practitioners and members of the community to engage and talk with us.

It will come as no surprise to learn that 2013 will be another big year for AHPRA and the National Scheme. Many National Boards are reviewing their registration standards, a process that will include extensive preliminary and public consultations. This review gives everyone – the public, practitioners and stakeholders – an opportunity to continue to shape health practitioner regulation in Australia.



I am particularly pleased to announce the establishment of a Community Reference Group and the call for applications to join this group. The Community Reference Group will advise AHPRA and National Boards on ways in which community understanding and involvement in our work can be strengthened. This might include strategies for promoting greater community response to consultations, ways in which the national registers can be more accessible and better understood and strategies to build greater community understanding of how practitioner regulation works.

Our work with governments continues. In Victoria, the Minister for Health, David Davis MP, announced a review of the performance of AHPRA in October 2012, conducted through the Legislative Council's Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee.

AHPRA and the 14 National Boards are currently preparing their submissions and will give evidence or participate in any way that helps deepen the committee's understanding of how the National Scheme works in Victoria.

The Victorian review is locally focused and precedes a national review of the National Scheme to be conducted after its first three years of operation.

AHPRA and the Medical Board of Australia are working with Queensland's Minister for Health, Lawrence Springborg MP, and Queensland Health to implement the recommendations of the Chesterman Inquiry. Jeffrey Hunter SC has been appointed to review files where doctors have been disciplined following the death or serious bodily harm of a patient.

And of course, there is the usual day-to-day work. AHPRA will place continued emphasis on our overriding commitments of consistency, service and capability in our work to keep the public safe and contribute to the development of the Australian health workforce.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive
martin.fletcher@ahpra.gov.au

Accountability and transparency

Our commitment to transparency and accountability continues, with an expansion of the information published about legal issues and hearing decisions.

AHPRA has now published a table of panel hearing decisions dating back to July 2010. Summaries have been provided where there is educational and clinical value.

These summaries are accessible from hyperlinks within the table. Practitioners' names are not published, consistent with the requirements of the National Law.

Published hearing decisions from adjudication bodies (other than panels) relating to complaints and notifications made about health practitioners or students are available on the Austlii website. Some summaries of tribunal decisions are also provided, to help share information and guide practitioners.

AHPRA will also publish a series of legal practice notes to support the consistent understanding and application of the National Law by National Boards and AHPRA staff. We will publish these on the website for their wider value.



Online searchable course database – an Australian first

A comprehensive, easily searchable national database of approved programs of study is now accessible through the [AHPRA website](#).

For the first time, potential students, practitioners, the public and education providers can conduct an easy online search to identify approved programs of study. This allows potential students to check courses to ensure that they will lead to registration with one of the National Boards.

Detailed information about individual programs of study, such as course length, approval dates and any conditions, is published in one place. It also means that education providers can check, in real time, any changes or updates to the approved programs of study that they are required to report on for student registration.

This new capability is another tangible example of the benefits of the National Scheme to all Australians.

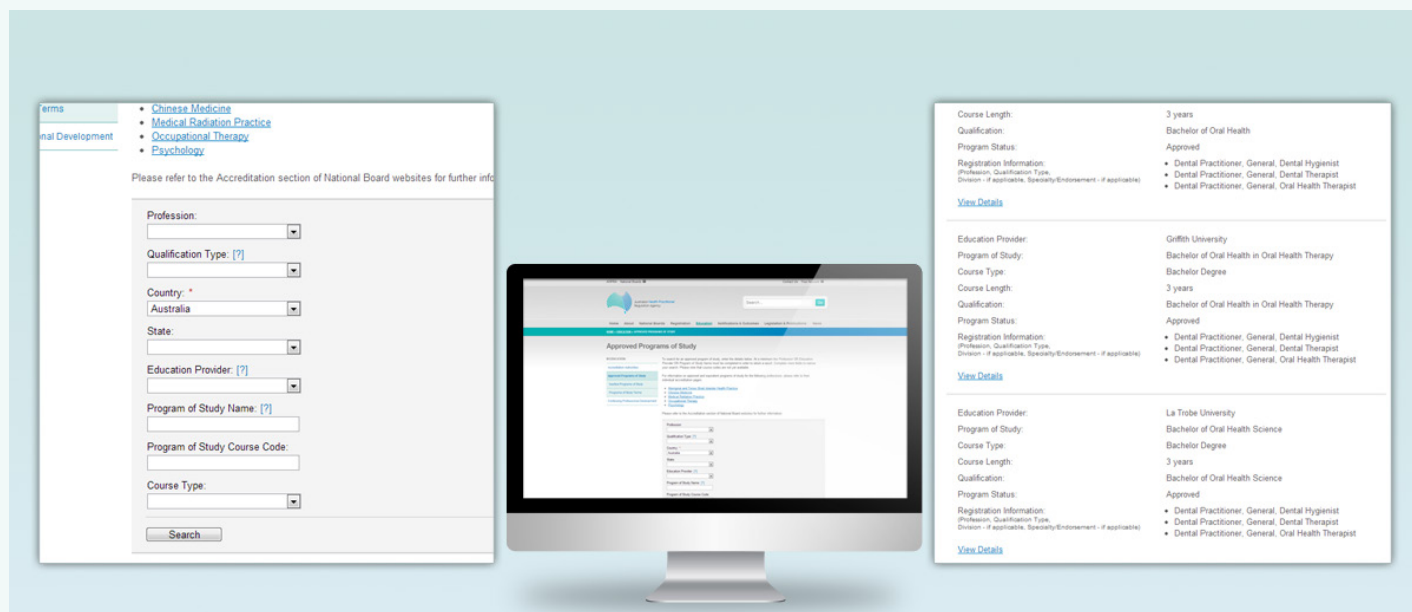
The online service provides a single point of entry to important information that was previously scattered between states and territories. It is only possible through the National Scheme, because education programs for all professions are accredited nationally and AHPRA is able to gather national data about accredited courses.

The searchable database replaces previously published static lists for each profession and makes it easier and quicker to find important information about approved programs of study for the following professions: chiropractic, dental, medical, nursing and midwifery, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy and podiatry.

Searchable lists for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, medical radiation practice, occupational therapy and psychology will be available in the future. The approved and equivalent programs of study for these professions continue to be available on the individual National Board accreditation pages on their websites.

The searchable list includes inactive programs of study. These are typically programs that are no longer approved by a National Board but which still entitle graduates to apply for registration for a period of five years from the date the course was no longer approved.

The database can be accessed at www.ahpra.gov.au/Education/Approved-Programs-of-Study.aspx.



AHPRA hosts Vietnamese delegation

December 2012 AHPRA hosted a delegation of 10 Vietnamese Government officials led by the Deputy Minister for Health, Madam Professor Nguyễn Thị Xuyên. The delegation came to learn more about the implementation of national health practitioner regulation in Australia. This is an example of the increasing international interest in our work and a measure of the innovation of Australia's approach.

The officials were keen to learn from AHPRA's experience and how the National Scheme works. Regulatory arrangements in Vietnam have recently changed, with the key feature of their new system a requirement for health professionals to be registered and hold a practising certificate.

This is an important health safety and quality improvement for Vietnam, where the new scheme will bring significant change as it introduces concepts of scope and standards of practice, ethical standards, and continuing professional development. There will also be a complaints mechanism for health consumers for the first time and penalties for certain behaviours by health professionals.

The visit to AHPRA was to help prepare delegation members for the implementation process. During their visit, delegates spent time with the chairs of the Medical Board of Australia and Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, as well as members of the Agency Management Committee.



Prof. Nguyễn Thị Xuyên (centre front) and members of the delegation with Lisa Wardlaw-Kelly, EO, Governance and Data, AHPRA (2nd from right, front row) and Debra Gillick, EO, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia (back row, far right)

There was also great participation from AHPRA staff from the Victorian office and those involved in the recent transition of four more health professions to the National Scheme last July.

Health profession regulation is increasingly acknowledged as a global challenge and responsibility. This visit provided an opportunity to build ongoing relations with a neighbouring regulator and positively contribute lessons from the Australian experience to regulation in our region.

Community Reference Group: applications now open

Individuals with strong links to communities are invited to nominate as members of the Community Reference Group being established by AHPRA and the National Boards.

The Community Reference Group is designed to advise AHPRA and National Boards on ways in which community understanding and involvement in our work can be strengthened. This might include strategies for promoting greater community response to consultations, ways in which the national registers of practitioners can be more accessible and better understood and strategies to build greater community understanding of how practitioner regulation works.

We will work with the Community Reference Group to agree on a set of priorities. This will build on the community feedback received at the recent community forums held across Australia. The forums were a partnership with the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF).

They provided an opportunity for AHPRA and members of national and state boards to meet members of the public to explain how health practitioner regulation works and what it offers the community, and to get feedback on issues of concern. A webinar is planned for 2013 for interested members of the community in rural and remote areas. Further information will be available on AHPRA and CHF websites in coming months.

The Community Reference Group will complement the role of community members of the National Boards. The group will consist of members from the community who are not health practitioners or current/past members of a National Board or committee in the National Scheme.

An application pack is now available on the AHPRA and National Boards' websites, which includes information about applying, the proposed terms of reference for the Community Reference Group, and a nomination form.

Nominations close at **9am on Monday 11 February** and can be sent via email to amelia.cavanagh@ahpra.gov.au.

Registration renewal update

The support of key stakeholders during our renewal campaigns has resulted in the highest number ever of practitioners renewing their registration on time and online. Thank you to everyone – employers, professional associations and government departments – who helped to spread the ‘renew on time and online’ message.

Registration renewal went smoothly for more than 130,000 practitioners due to renew by the end of 2012. Thank you to everyone for their efforts in helping to achieve a strong result that improved on our 2011 performance. It was the first time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, Chinese medicine practitioners, medical radiation practitioners and occupational therapists needed to renew in the National Scheme.

For AHPRA's teams, this meant an additional 19,800 renewal applications due by 30 November, on top of the increased number of practitioners registered in the other professions.

Our robust online services, nationally consistent processes, systematic communications campaign and response to individual practitioner questions through CSTs and registration teams resulted in an impressive 97% of the more than 127,000 practitioners due to renew by 30 November doing so on time.

More than 3,700 nurses and midwives, the majority based in Western Australia, were required to renew their registration by 31 December. Of the 92% who renewed on time, 95% did so online. These nurses and midwives are now registered to practise until 31 May 2013 and are the last to be aligned to the national annual renewal date.

Health practitioners can check when their registration is due on the [national registers of practitioners](#).

In 2012, for the first time AHPRA gave health practitioners the option to go [online](#) and ‘opt out’ of renewing their registration. Practitioners who ‘opted out’ could put a stop to renewal reminders from AHPRA. This online option provides the National Boards and AHPRA with better data about the number of practitioners who choose to opt out, to distinguish them from individuals who intend to renew, but do not do so on time.

The growing number of practitioners renewing on time and online shows the systemic benefits of national regulation, which is providing practitioners with a smooth and simple renewal experience. For further information, or to provide your feedback on the renewal process, please contact communications@ahpra.gov.au.

Practitioner audit

The work of AHPRA and the National Boards to introduce a comprehensive and fair approach to audit continues. Practitioner audits are an important mechanism for better protecting the public. They help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet to be registered and provide important assurance to the National Boards and the community.

A report of phase one of the pilot conducted with the pharmacy profession has been released and is now available on the AHPRA website. The report explains AHPRA's approach to auditing practitioner compliance with the National Boards' registration standards and the lessons learned from the pilot for the ongoing development of practitioner audits.

The second phase of the pilot commenced in November 2012, with the registration renewal period. Using the findings from the first phase, practitioners from pharmacy, chiropractic and optometry professions were randomly selected to be audited for compliance in relation to their Board's registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development.

A report on the second stage of the pilot will be published on the AHPRA website later this year.

Consultation update

Consultations provide an important opportunity for practitioners, members of the community and other stakeholders to provide feedback on draft documents and help shape the future of health practitioner regulation in Australia.

This will be a big year for National Board consultations, with dozens of papers scheduled for public consultation. The best way to keep abreast of upcoming or current consultations is to check the National Boards' websites, particularly the monthly communiqués and the consultations page on the [websites](#).

Current consultations

National Board	Consultation name	Submission deadline
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion paper to assess the relative safety risk associated with practitioners who practise in a drug and alcohol or mental health service delivery role. More information	22 February 2013
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey: consultation on revised national competency standards for nurse practitioners. More information	1 March 2013
Optometry Board of Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public consultation on amendments to guidelines for use of scheduled medicines. More information	4 February 2013
Osteopathy Board of Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft guidelines for informed consent Guidelines for supervision of osteopaths Draft sexual and professional boundaries guidelines. More information	15 February 2013

Upcoming consultations

National Board(s)	Consultation name
All National Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common guidelines and codes (including social media and advertising)

Closed consultations

A number of consultations have recently closed:

- Chinese medicine – infection control guidelines specific to acupuncture practice
- chiropractic – draft guidelines for clinical supervision
- dental – review of accreditation arrangements, and
- nursing and midwifery – review of accreditation arrangements.

Submissions to these consultations will be published on the relevant National Board's website on the past consultations page (follow the *News* link).

Accreditation consultation update

Ministers assigned accreditation functions for the first 10 professions in the National Scheme to external accreditation authorities. The National Law requires that National Boards review the accreditation arrangements for these professions by 30 June 2013. A review process began in mid 2012, based on principles agreed by the National Boards, the accreditation authorities (through the Australian Health Professions Councils' Forum) and AHPRA. The review included wide-ranging consultation as required by the National Law.

The Boards are finalising their reviews early in 2013. Seven of the Boards have already completed their review, having carefully considered feedback received during the review process. In each case, the Board has decided that accreditation functions for the profession will continue to be exercised by the relevant council for a further period.

The Boards' decisions are subject to a program of work that includes key issues identified by each Board to be addressed during that period.

In deciding that the accreditation function should continue to be exercised by the councils, the Boards balanced the requirement for flexibility and responsiveness to developments such as the review of the National Scheme, with the need for certainty and continuity for education providers and to enable effective planning and efficient management by the councils. Accordingly, the Boards will build appropriate flexibility into their future arrangements with the councils.

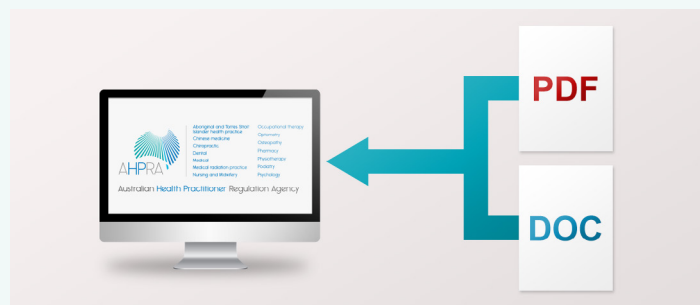
Submissions to these consultations will be published on the relevant National Board's website on the past consultations page (follow the *News* link).

Website accessibility

AHPRA and the National Boards recognise the importance of providing a website that is inclusive and available for all user groups. We are changing the way web documents are published as part of our commitment to providing websites that are accessible to all users.

This is in line with AHPRA's goal to achieve Level A compliance with the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). This change in process is an important step in AHPRA complying with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as well as supporting the goals of two of our 2012-13 Business Plan initiatives.

Whenever possible, documents and downloadable files on this website will be published in multiple formats. These formats include Portable Document Format (PDF), Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word (DOC) and Microsoft Excel (XLS).



If you cannot access these documents in the formats that are available on this website, please contact us through 1300 419 495 and ask for the Web Services team.

Agency Management Committee

The Agency Management Committee oversees AHPRA's work, including deciding policies. A focus for the committee is on ensuring an effective and efficient partnership between AHPRA and the National Boards.

The committee's current membership is Mr Peter Allen (Chair), Professor Genevieve Gray, Professor Merrilyn Walton, Mr Michael Gorton AM, Professor Constantine (Con) Michael AO, Mr Ian Smith and Ms Karen Crawshaw PSM. Profiles of members are published on the [AHPRA website](#).

The committee will meet eight times during 2013. Minutes of Part One of Agency Management Committee meetings are published on the [AHPRA website](#).



AHPRA people: meet Kym Ayscough

A solicitor with more than 12 years' experience in professional regulation in the health and legal sectors, and 15 years in public sector administration, Kym brings a great depth of knowledge and expertise to the role of New South Wales State Manager.

It was her interest in the newly established National Registration and Accreditation Scheme that brought Kym to AHPRA in March 2010. As she explains, 'The National Scheme is a world first. The opportunity to be involved from the beginning in shaping both AHPRA as an organisation and the national regulatory scheme more broadly was too good to miss'.

'I've always been up for a challenge and the challenge of building a team, an office and a scheme from scratch was exciting. Having worked in regulation with a number of individual professions, I was keen to experience working simultaneously with multiple professions.'

The understanding that, regardless of profession, regulators act in the interest of the public has been very useful in making the transition to the National Scheme. This contribution to public protection is both one of the benefits and one of the challenges of working in professional regulation.

Kym is now looking forward to taking up her new role of National Coordinator, Regulatory Operations, which adds to her role as NSW State Manager. Following discussions within AHPRA about opportunities to accelerate and deepen the delivery of commitments to service, consistency and capability, CEO Martin Fletcher announced the new role on 21 January 2013. As part of the National Executive, Kym will be focused on improving national consistency and coordinating the delivery of AHPRA's core regulatory functions through the network of state and territory offices.



As the model of national regulation is somewhat different in New South Wales, Kym works in strong partnership with the co-regulatory agencies in that State – the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Health Professional Councils Authority.

As a result of the co-regulatory model in NSW, the vast majority of AHPRA NSW staff work only on registration (including renewal) matters. The entire senior team, including Kym, are deeply involved in all aspects of AHPRA's registration functions (including renewal and audit). Kym says that this has enabled them to take a leading role in identifying opportunities for efficiencies in registration processes that can apply nationwide.

Around 30% of registered practitioners have a principal place of practice in NSW and the NSW office receives approximately 35% of all registration applications. In the face of such high volume, the capacity of the NSW staff, particularly in more recent times, to consistently meet the expectations set out in the AHPRA service charter is impressive. Kym is particularly proud of her team's ability to host two pilots of the audit methodology for compliance with Boards' registration standards in 2012/2013. This is an important piece of work as this assurance of compliance is a significant contributor to AHPRA's public protection objective.

Kym's participation in the early days of the National Scheme has also informed her more recent work as Chair of the AHPRA State and Territory Managers Committee (STMC). 'It was really rewarding to facilitate the engagement of STMC with the project team and Boards working to bring the four new professions into the scheme in 2012', she says. 'We were able to draw on our experience with the introduction of the National Scheme to anticipate resourcing requirements, refine communications strategies and advise Boards on the operational impacts of various proposals before decisions were made.'

Among Kym's personal highlights has been seeing the STMC come together as part of the senior management team of AHPRA and take a leading role in enhancing consistency of process and service improvements.

Before joining AHPRA, Kym was the CEO and Registrar of the Pharmacy Board of New South Wales for seven years. Her earlier roles in public administration were primarily in the areas of employment, education and training. Kym holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Master of Law and Management.

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 password 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.

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 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.

Current consultations

The National Boards frequently seek feedback from the professions, the community and other stakeholders on a range of issues. Check the National Board websites regularly via the [AHPRA website](#) to keep up to date with current consultations.

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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