

Professions Reference Group Communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met via video conference on Wednesday 8 September 2021. The meeting was chaired by Nello Marino from the Australian Podiatry Association.

The Professions Reference Group discussed the following:

- COVID-19 surge workforce response enhancements – In response to the Commonwealth Health Minister and jurisdictions requests, Ahpra and the National Boards are helping provide access to a potential surge workforce as the healthcare system experiences changing demands due to COVID-19 outbreaks. It is doing this in three ways: practitioners on the 2020 pandemic sub-register (previously only allowed to help with the COVID-19 vaccination program) are now able to practise in any area that supports the COVID-19 response; establishing a 2021 sub-register enabling nearly 29,000 practitioners from 12 professions to return to practice at the full scope of their registration for 12 months; and working with government health departments and employers to help connect practitioners on the sub-registers to employment opportunities.
- There are 13 health professions due to renew their registration which expires on 30 November 2021. To improve practitioner registration renewal, Ahpra has made changes to the process, including introducing a cultural identity question to help embed cultural safety in the ways we work within the National Scheme; removal of hard copy forms for general, specialist and non-practising practitioners; removal of BPay as a payment method; and improved renewal communications by creating a central [registration renewal page](#) on the Ahpra website.
- The graduate registration campaign will begin on 13 September 2021 where graduates will be asked to apply early if they are completing their course within the next three months. Priority lodgement period for nurses, midwives, and medical practitioners is scheduled for September/October, and all other professions from mid-October. Updated information, including a flyer and video, is available on the Ahpra [Graduate applications page](#) to help graduates avoid common causes of delay.
- The Notifier Support Service is now up and running with two social workers starting work in August/September 2021. Our lead social worker comes with remarkable experience working in victim and witness assistance services and has significant knowledge about the potential impact that the complaints process has on people who have had traumatic experiences.
- Ahpra will conduct a series of meetings and interviews to talk about consumer health complaints with consumer bodies, indemnity insurance providers, and professional organisations across jurisdictions to learn more about how well the health consumer complaints process is working.
- International models, such as the work of United Kingdom regulator [General Osteopathic Council](#) in developing case studies about professional practice issues, was discussed as potential ways to educate practitioners on complaint handling, potential outcomes, how to improve their practice and avoid complaints.
- The meeting noted that Ahpra and the National Boards support professional practice through the publication of regular summaries about court and tribunal outcomes in newsletters and in the annual report. Continued improvements, feedback and suggestions in this area are welcome from members.

The next PRG meeting is on Wednesday 17 November 2021, 4pm to 5pm.

Nello Marino

Chair
Professions Reference Group