

Professions Reference Group communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met via video conference on Wednesday 26 July 2023.

Chief Executive - verbal update

Update on the Kruk Review

The work of the review is continuing, in anticipation of National Cabinet receiving a final report and recommendations from the Independent Reviewer (Ms Robyn Kruk AO) in late August. In June, we provided a further submission to the review, which covered:

- work already underway by Ahpra and National Boards to improve the skills assessment and recognition of qualifications of overseas based practitioners
- our views on priorities for the short and medium term, and
- the need for additional resourcing to support implementation of key actions from the review.

Members noted there was strong support for largely all recommendations contained in the [interim report](#) which is available at the link.

Update on Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on practitioner distress

We are continuing to let stakeholders know about the findings of the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) and to ask for their involvement and support in implementing its recommendations and actions.

We have recently submitted a paper for publication in a peer review journal *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*. The PRG will be informed if the paper is accepted and proceeds to publication. We are now focused on implementing the recommendations and

The last meeting of the Expert Advisory Group in its current form will be in July. A re-mandated group will provide ongoing independent and objective advice to the CEO on the implementation of the r

Blueprint to improve public safety in health regulation

The blueprint to improve public safety in health regulation was announced on 14 February 2023, and commitments made were agreed by Health Ministers at their meeting on 24 February 2023. There are 13 agreed actions in the implementation plan to better protect patients from sexual misconduct in healthcare. Many of these actions are still being worked through with stakeholders, including co-regulators and other government agencies.

Ahpra has established a cross-directorate Steering Committee to oversee this work. Initial work is focusing on

- the Criminal history registration standard review
- work to improve the experience for individuals who are participating in our notifications processes
- commissioning research on the outcomes of sexual misconduct matters, and
- exploring options and timeframes for increasing community membership on decision-making committees, recommendations and actions of the EAG.

Cosmetic surgery reform update

Ahpra and the Medical Board continue to implement the recommendations from the Independent review of the Regulation of medical practitioners who perform cosmetic surgery. The independent review's final report and the joint Ahpra and the MBA response were released on 1 September 2022, with Ahpra and the MBA accepting all recommendations.

On 15 June 2023, the independently chaired Cosmetic Surgery Oversight Group (CSOG) published the [communiqué](#) from its third meeting which was held on 26 May 2023.

Commencement of new registration standard and new and updated guidelines specific to cosmetic surgery

On 3 April 2023, the Medical Board published advance copies of the following documents, all of which took effect on 1 July 2023:

- updated Guidelines for registered medical practitioners who perform cosmetic surgery and procedures
- new Guidelines for registered medical practitioners who advertise cosmetic surgery
- Registration standard: Endorsement of registration of registered medical practitioners for the approved area of cosmetic surgery.

The registration standard and guidelines have continued to be of great interest to stakeholders. In the lead up to the commencement of the guidelines, Ahpra and the Medical Board published updated FAQs, particularly relating to the purpose and processes for GP referrals, and patient assessment and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) screening.

Regulatory Operations update

The registration renewal campaign for nursing and midwifery has showed no significant issues through the renewal period and we are now preparing for the medical renewal. International medical practitioners numbers continue to increase, and we are seeing more coming into Australia using the TTMR (Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition) pathway to registration.

Transformation Program update – standing agenda item

The large-scale Transformation Program replacing the entire operating IT system for registration and notification is getting closer. There have been some delays with the implementation and given the proximity to the medical renewal campaign, we do not want to jeopardise the renewal campaign by implementing too early. The data migration is substantial and significant, and the technical go live will be completed safely with all the data migration correct before going live.

Review of the English language skills registration standards- update

Members noted an update on the National Boards' review of the current English language skills (ELS) registration standards (except the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia's standard) in response to the Independent Review of Overseas Health Practitioner Regulatory Settings interim report findings.

Members noted the proposal to undertake further public consultation on potential additional changes to the standards recommended in the interim report of the Kruk review.

Ahpra and National Boards' position statement Registered health practitioners and students and COVID-19 vaccination.

Members were provided with an overview of the review of Ahpra and the National Boards' position statement. Targeted consultation with key jurisdictional and co-regulatory stakeholders was undertaken in June 2023. The targeted consultation heard that these stakeholders are supportive of Ahpra and National Boards evolving the current position statement to provide information to registered health practitioners about vaccination/immunisation more broadly, rather than a COVID-specific position statement.

Julianne Bryce

Chair
Professions Reference Group