



National Scheme Engagement strategy

2023–2025

Building trust and confidence in the work we do to protect the health and safety of the public

Acknowledgement of Country

Ahpra and the National Boards acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands in which we regulate registered health practitioners in Australia. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as the oldest continuing cultures in the world and appreciate that, over thousands of generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have taken great care of Country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples never ceded sovereignty: this continent always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We recognise the impacts that colonisation has had and continues to have on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge all First Nations Peoples.

Introduction

There is growing evidence that trust is fundamentally important to be an effective regulator.¹

We rely on members of the community, health practitioners, students, employers, co-regulators, educators and many others to engage and work with us, as we regulate approximately 850,000 registered health practitioners across Australia.²

We are committed to working with a broad range of people and organisations and doing our part to protect the health and safety of the public within a wider network of regulation.

This strategy:

- outlines the broad principles that guide our strategic engagement,
- aims to ensure that our interactions with individuals and organisations are consistently respectful, person-centred and contribute towards our regulatory objectives,
- provides an overview of ways we will engage with people and organisations over the next five years.

The strategy supports the [National Registration and Accreditation Scheme \(National Scheme\) Strategy 2020-25](#). It expands on the 'Trust and confidence' pillar and its purpose is to support Ahpra and the National Boards to deliver on the goals and objectives of the National Scheme Strategy 2020-25.

The strategy also complements our [service charter](#), which sets out our practical service commitments to the people and organisations we work with.

This strategy recognises that National Boards may also develop engagement communications strategies and plans tailored to their purpose and remit.

Cultural safety

Cultural safety is a critical component of healthcare. It includes the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism. Our commitment to the work of improved cultural safety and safe and appropriate engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their communities is set out in the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020-2025](#). This strategy sets a clear direction and course of action for Ahpra, National Boards and Accreditation Authorities, who together regulate Australia's registered health practitioners.

Supporting the diversity of the people and communities we engage with

Our engagement work recognises the diversity of people and communities we work with, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ peoples, those living with a disability and other priority populations. In our work we actively engage with and respond to these communities in support of protecting the health and safety of the public

Objective and themes of the strategy

This engagement strategy aims to build people's trust and confidence in our work by focussing on three themes:

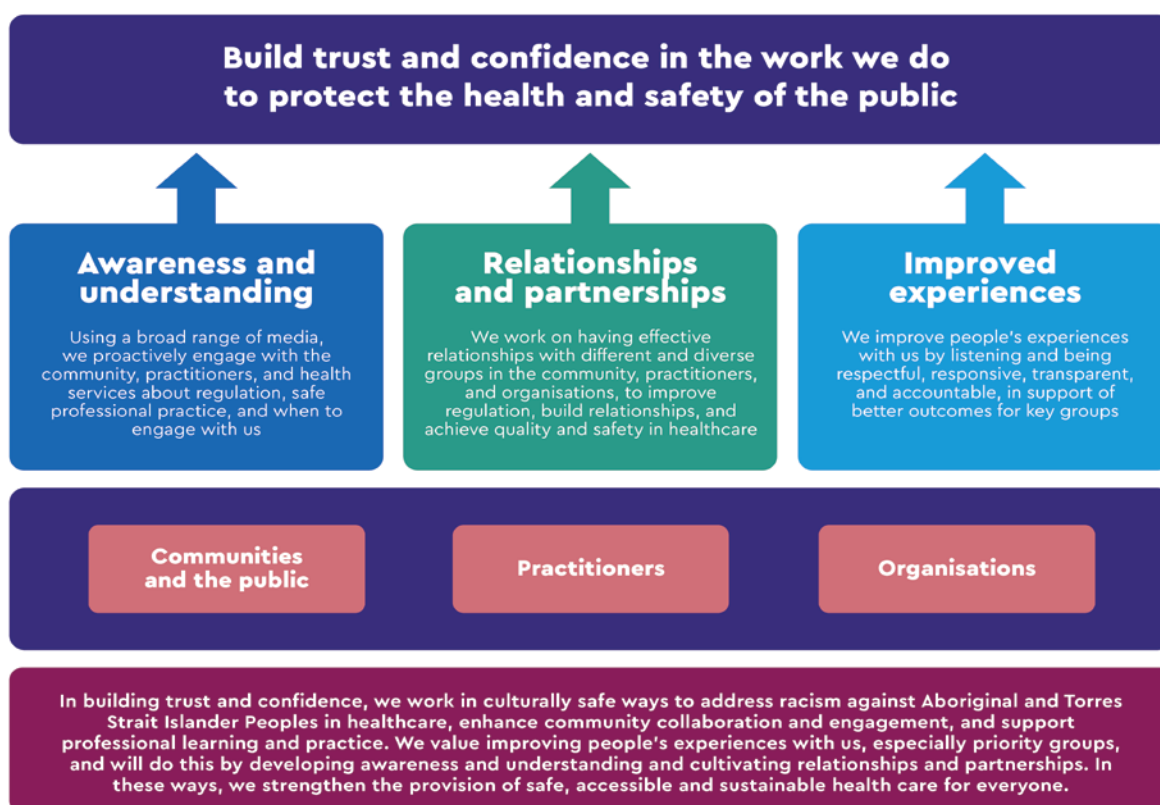
- building awareness and understanding
- developing relationships and partnerships, and
- improving experiences.

The graphic below outlines the guiding principles for our engagement with communities, practitioners, and the organisations we work with. The work is supported by an implementation plan.

¹ OECD (2017) How Better Governance Can Help Rebuild Public Trust, www.oecd.org/governance/trust-and-public-policy-9789264268920-en.htm

² Ahpra and the National Boards (the Boards) are charged with the regulation of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (2009)* (the National Law) as enacted in each state and territory in Australia.

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People we work with

We can't do this work alone. We need to work collaboratively. The stakeholders we work with can be grouped into the following three categories: communities and the public, practitioners, and organisations.

Communities and the public	Practitioners	Organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> patients, carers, and consumers of health services notifiers health consumer representatives diverse communities, including cultural, LGBTIQ+, language, people living with disability, remote and rural, and younger and older people³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and leaders Community Advisory Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> registered health practitioners health practitioners seeking registration students of approved health practitioner courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers for Health and their departments co-regulators of health practitioners accreditation bodies education providers profession representative organisations health complaints entities health care providers/employers professional indemnity insurers other regulators international partners

³ Several of these specific groups were highlighted by the COAG Health Ministers in Policy Direction 2019-1 to Ahpra and the National Boards to consider the impact of practitioners' conduct on these priority cohorts.

How we will engage

Engagement is relationship-based work. To help shape our approach, we have drawn on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, which is recognised as the international standard for defining forms of engagement.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Our commitment	We will provide accessible, timely and appropriate information.	We will consistently ask people how we can improve and consult formally as needed.	We will involve people to ensure that we incorporate their concerns in our work of effective regulation. We will communicate about how their feedback influenced our decisions.	We will work as a partner, sharing knowledge, listening, and developing alternatives which incorporate recommendations and innovations to the maximum possible extent.	We will create shared networks, empowering people to develop and lead decision making initiatives, ensuring the community voice is heard.
How we will engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive media strategies • National Board and Ahpra websites • Ahpra and National Board news publications • Annual Report • Social media strategies • Practitioner Information Exchange • Podcasts • Notifier and practitioner website videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Board and Ahpra consultations • Notifier and practitioner experience surveys and interviews • National Board strategies (e.g. Medical Training Survey) • New registrant surveys • Stakeholder liaison forums • Consumer peak bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with police, Dept of Health, etc. • Partnership agreements • Advisory groups • Webinars and forums • Community Advisory Council (CAC) • Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professions Reference Group • Regulatory Expert Advisory Group • National Board collaborations • WHO Collaborating Centre • CAC is represented on the Forum of National Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy Group • Expert advisory panels

Ongoing monitoring of our progress

Ahpra and the Boards will implement this strategy in line with the [National Scheme Strategy 2020-25](#).

We will monitor and evaluate our progress annually through:

1. Project REACH social research survey results, measuring trust and confidence in the National Scheme
2. engagement data in our regulatory work such as notifier and practitioner surveys/interviews and surveys of new (first-time) registrants
3. sentiment reflected in media coverage, and
4. progress on the balanced scorecard of relevant measures built into the *National Scheme Strategy 2020-25*.

We will publicly share our progress.

Important note

This strategy is not a legal instrument and does not supersede our legislative commitments. The National Law directs Ahpra and National Boards in our work to regulate registered health practitioners.

For more information

If you have questions about this strategy, please contact Ahpra's Regulatory Engagement and Experience team by emailing experience@ahpra.gov.au.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency & National Boards

www.ahpra.gov.au 1300 419 495

Ahpra and the National Boards regulate these registered health professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, midwifery, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, paramedicine, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.