

Communiqué

December 2020

The Podiatry Board of Australia (the Board) meets each month to consider and decide on matters related to its regulatory functions under the National Law¹ and within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme).

This communiqué aims to inform stakeholders of the work of the Board and matters regarding the National Scheme.

The Board held its December 2020 meeting by Zoom.

Endorsement for scheduled medicines

In [early April](#), we recognised that due to the exceptional circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, practitioners working towards endorsement for scheduled medicines under Pathway B may not be able to complete their period of supervised practice within 12 months. The Board provided a three-month extension for all practitioners in Pathway B to complete their period of supervised practice. The Board monitored the situation and provided further three-month extensions in June and September.

At the December meeting, the Board agreed to provide one further three-month extension for all practitioners in Pathway B to complete their period of supervised practice.

After 31 March 2021, practitioners who require further time to complete their period of supervised practice can apply under the Board's *Policy: Extension of time to complete period of supervised practice under Pathway B*. The policy is published on the [Endorsement for scheduled medicines](#) page of our website and the application form is published on the [Forms](#) page.

We encourage practitioners in Pathway B to continue with your learning and attend observational clinical placements where they are available, in line with the COVID-19 guidance in your state or territory and it is safe for you to do so.

We also encourage you to continue to have discussions with your mentor, develop your clinical studies and submit them for initial assessment and work on your portfolio of evidence as much as you can.

Renewal of registration – late applications

Podiatrists and podiatric surgeons who did not apply to renew their registration by 30 November 2020 are now in the late renewal period and have until 31 December to apply. Renewal applications received in December will incur a late payment fee in addition to the annual renewal fee. A [fees schedule](#) is published on the Board's website.

Podiatrists and podiatric surgeons, whose application for general and/or specialist registration is received during the one-month late period, can continue practising while their application is processed.

Practitioners who do not apply to renew their registration by 31 December 2020 will have lapsed registration. They will be removed from the [Register of podiatrists](#), and/or the Board's specialist register in the case of podiatric surgeons, and will not be able to practise in Australia.

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

Podiatry Accreditation Committee public consultation underway

The Podiatry Accreditation Committee is calling for feedback on draft proposed professional capabilities and accreditation standards. Information about the consultation can be found [here](#).

Revised advertising guidelines are now in effect

If you advertise your health services, it's time to check whether your advertising complies with the updated *Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service*, which took effect on 14 December 2020. The guidelines were revised jointly by the National Boards and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) in a scheduled review.

Anyone who advertises a regulated health service must meet the advertising requirements of the National Law. This includes registered health practitioners, individuals who are not health practitioners and businesses.

The guidelines aim to help registered health practitioners, and other advertisers, advertise responsibly so that the public receives accurate and clear information about regulated health services.

Changes to the guidelines include:

- more content about testimonials, protected titles and claims about registration, competence and qualifications
- new content about the evidence required for claims about the effectiveness of a regulated health service and what is acceptable evidence
- restructuring of content so that information is easier to find, and
- new flowcharts to help assess when advertising needs to be supported by acceptable evidence and whether a review is considered a testimonial.

The National Boards and Ahpra have also updated *the Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy for the National Scheme* following an evaluation in 2019. The strategy was launched in 2017 to improve voluntary compliance with the advertising requirements and to introduce a new enforcement approach to non-compliance.

The revised advertising guidelines and updated strategy can be found on the Ahpra website:

- [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#)
- [Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy for the National Scheme](#).

Also, have a listen to the recent episode of Ahpra's *Taking care* podcast, [Responsible advertising by regulated health services](#), which features a discussion about some of the risks, opportunities and nuances of advertising regulated health services.

Resetting our approach to investigations

National Boards and Ahpra stand for safe, professional healthcare practice.

All health practitioners and the workplaces at which they practise have roles to play in ensuring public safety. We are improving the way we manage our regulatory investigations about practitioners to better account for our collective responsibilities.

We know that the public are best protected when we support practitioners and their employers to improve safety and professionalism in the delivery of health services. Our efforts and resources should better focus on matters where there are gaps in safe practice that create ongoing risk to the public.

Our revised approach, in place now, aims to improve the experience of notifiers and practitioners by completing most investigations faster. There is a stronger focus on speaking directly to the practitioner. This is so we can gather early information about the practitioner's individual practice, reflection and their actions in response to notified events. This is key to:

- closing concerns about low risk practitioners faster, and
- concentrating our investigations on practitioners that represent higher risk.

Practitioners can help with this by:

- engaging the supports they need through the process, including indemnifiers and/or professional associations and colleges
- providing Ahpra with the information it needs as early as possible, and
- giving their employer permission to share information about them with Ahpra to help validate what the practitioner has told us.

We also want to understand what a practitioner's workplace has done in response to the events.

The level of information we need to gather is more wide ranging when the concerns raised could constitute professional misconduct. This includes boundary violations, criminal and unethical behaviour, and significant departure from acceptable standards.

The National Board will take action in response to a concern, when the actions of an individual practitioner and/or their workplaces are not sufficient, to ensure we can prevent the same thing happening again.

More information is available on Ahpra's [Concerns about practitioners page](#).

What do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners do?

A member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board joined our December meeting to tell us about what their practitioners do, the ways in which their role benefits the communities they serve, and how our professions can work together to strengthen cultural safety and improve care for Indigenous Australians.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners work across various organisations, mainly in public health areas and community-controlled health services.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners have access to MBS item numbers and provide a broad range of services to their communities. Depending on their state or territory and type of government or non-government organisation, these services may include giving immunisations; assessment and screening of physical, social and emotional wellbeing; health promotion; administering and supplying medications; advocating for clients; and providing advice, support and training on culturally safe health services to other health practitioners.

Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can train and register as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners. They build trust and bring an understanding that is central to providing culturally safe services across the Australian healthcare system. They strengthen culturally safe practice by working alongside non-Indigenous health practitioners, sharing knowledge.

Here are a few very specific things you can do to help.

Ask your health service, employer or other team members:

- How many Aboriginal Health Practitioners do we employ?
- Did you know we could make our practice more culturally safe by employing an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner, and help to close the gap?

You can also:

- help increase the use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, and
- distribute the pamphlets highlighting the role and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners to the Australian health care system and helping to Close the Gap. (available on the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Health Islander Practice Board's website](#)).

An episode of Ahpra's *Taking Care* podcast released in October, [Collaboration across professions: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners](#), hears from the Chair and practitioner member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board; a dual registered Aboriginal health practitioner and nurse; a GP and a midwife, about the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners in our healthcare system.

Inaugural strategy to increase our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

Ahpra marked NAIDOC Week 2020 by releasing the inaugural [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020-2025](#) (the Employment Strategy).

The goal of the Employment Strategy is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation within Ahpra through the development of a culturally safe work environment that reflects the diversity of the communities in which we operate and serve.

It is a key deliverable for the National Scheme's [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020–2025](#), which aims to improve cultural safety, increase workforce participation, strive for greater access and close the gap in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other Australians.

You can read more about the Employment strategy in the [news item](#).

Virtual Stakeholder engagement

In late November the Board had a discussion by Zoom with the Tasmanian Chief Allied Health Advisor, a podiatrist working in public health and a podiatrist working in private practice.

The focus of the discussion was to gain an understanding of how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected podiatry practice in Tasmania, including the challenges and opportunities facing podiatrists in that state during the pandemic. The Board was interested in hearing the perspectives and experiences of podiatrists working in regional and metropolitan areas of Tasmania and the different experiences between public health podiatrists and podiatrists in private practice.

The Board found the discussion very informative and plans to use this format to engage with key stakeholders in the future.

Newsletter from the Board

The Board published a newsletter in November 2020. Read it on the Board's [Newsletters page](#).

2019/20 annual report now published: regulating during a pandemic

The Ahpra and National Boards' [2019/20 annual report](#) was released on 12 November 2020.

The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the regulatory work of Ahpra and the National Boards, including the response to the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. You can read more about the annual report in the [news item](#).

A podiatry-specific statistical summary and a report from the Chair that covers the work of the Board over the 12 months to 30 June 2020 is also now available on our [website](#). The summary draws on data from the annual report.

This information provides a snapshot of the podiatry profession as at 30 June 2020 and includes the number of registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons, a breakdown by gender and age and outcomes of practitioner audits. Podiatry-specific data tables are also available for downloading.

Latest registration data published

The Board's quarterly registration data to 30 September 2020 is published on its website. Read the latest report [here](#).

Taking care podcasts: podcasts of conversations about public safety and health care

Ahpra hosts conversations and interviews with people in our community. The podcasts discuss current issues, address myths and common questions, and think about what we can do to best protect the public and support the safe delivery of health care in Australia.

[Download and listen](#) to the latest Ahpra Taking care podcast episode. Ahpra releases a new episode every fortnight, discussing current topics and the latest issues affecting safe healthcare in Australia. You can also listen and subscribe on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#) and by searching 'Taking Care' in your podcast player.

Further information

The Board publishes a range of information for podiatrists and podiatric surgeons on its [website](#) and practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting the podiatry profession.

For more information about registration, notifications or other matters relevant to the National Scheme, please refer to the information published on www.ahpra.gov.au. Alternatively, contact Ahpra by an [online enquiry form](#) or phone 1300 419 495.

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.



Season's Greetings

As this challenging year draws to a close, on behalf of the Board I wish you all a safe and happy festive season and all the best for 2021.

A/Prof Cylie Williams
Chair
Podiatry Board of Australia
December 2020