

Professions Reference Group communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met via video conference on Wednesday 14 September 2022. The meeting was chaired by Nello Marino from the Australian Podiatry Association.

The PRG discussed the following:

Cosmetic surgery review update

The final report of the independent review of the of *the Regulation of medical practitioners who perform cosmetic surgery* and the joint Ahpra and the MBA response were released on 1 September 2022, with Ahpra and the MBA accepting all 16 recommendations to improve patient safety in the cosmetic surgery industry.

Members noted a summary of some of the 16 recommendations as below:

- Ahpra will create an area of practice endorsement in cosmetic surgery. A doctor's registration on the public register will show if they have met clear standards in cosmetic surgery set by the Australian Medical Council and the Medical Board of Australia.
- Ahpra and the Medical Board will fully support and provide any assistance and advice to Health Ministers to amend the National Law protect the title 'surgeon'. If Ministers change the Law to protect the title 'Surgeon', then it is expected that only doctors with AMC-accredited qualifications could use the title Cosmetic Surgeons in future.
- Ahpra will enforce the ban on testimonials in cosmetic surgery advertising as they are likely to mislead, deceive and trivialise the risks.
- Ahpra has already established a hotline for cosmetic complaints and a cosmetic surgery enforcement unit to lead investigations into notifications about cosmetic surgery and conduct a proactive audit of cosmetic surgery advertising. We will provide the PRG with further information on the hotline and asked members to promote the hotline within their networks. Further information will be provided to the PRG on the hotline when available.

Members were also asked to advise Ahpra if they become aware of any cosmetic surgery social media posts or new platforms, they may see that raise concern.

Chief Executive - verbal update

At the 31 August 2022 meeting of National Cabinet, Ministers agreed to task Ahpra to accelerate skills and qualification recognition in key sectors. This work is now progressing and the PRG will be kept updated on the progress of our response.

Graduate Registration opened on 12 September and this year we expect to receive close to 40,000 applications during the graduate period (mid-September to end March), with the majority arriving during October and November.

To help smooth the arrival pattern of applications we will be inviting graduates to apply in the following staggered groupings:

- nurses and midwives, mid and end-September and mid-October
- medical practitioners in early October, and
- all remaining professions (except psychology) in late October.

This strategy has worked well in recent years to more evenly spread out the applications over the course of the campaign and allow us to both better manage assessments and in turn stakeholder expectations.

Project REACH

In previous years Ahpra has undertaken social research activities related to stakeholder perceptions of trust and confidence in the National Scheme. This work was previously coordinated by an external market research company.

Project REACH sets out a proposed five-year plan for research on trust and confidence in the National Scheme. It seeks to comprehensively understand Ahpra and the National Boards' reputation and build on previous work by:

- canvassing a wider range of priority and relevant stakeholders that can offer unique perspectives on Ahpra and the National Boards' reputation, and
- delivering clear and actionable findings to support activities to strengthen Ahpra and the National Boards' reputation.

The project will collect feedback from key stakeholders selected for their ability to provide unique perceptions on aspects of our regulatory performance, including registered practitioners, education providers, public (including priority groups such as the disabled and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples).

While Project REACH is being developed, Ahpra will continue to maintain surveying practitioners to ensure continuity in data and a practitioner survey will soon be released that is very similar to previous ones.

Supporting professional practice – practitioner resources

Several projects are underway as part of broader work undertaken by Ahpra and the National Boards to support professional practice as a key component of safe, effective health care.

Members were provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on a draft managing health records self-reflection tool and summary of obligations that aim to support professional practice in this area.

It also explores opportunities to test a proposed draft complaint handling checklist to support practitioners to resolve complaints at the local level. Members were also invited to identify practitioner volunteers to test the proposed draft complaint handling checklist.

Website refresh

Members noted that the delivery partner and our project team have been working through the discovery and design phases to refresh the look and feel of the Ahpra and National Boards websites.

Representatives from each Board, the Community Advisory Council and the Professions Reference Group have attended a design showcase on the new-look on 12 September.

The project will deliver site design improvements during a sensitive calendar window of registration/renewal engagement activity through November/December 2022 with the bulk of publicly visible change expected to be implemented in December.

2023 PRG meeting dates

Meeting dates for 2023 will be sent out of session as placeholders and confirmed at the November meeting.

Nello Marino

Chair

Professions Reference Group