

Professions Reference Group communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met via video conference on Wednesday 19 April 2023. The meeting was chaired by Julianne Bryce from the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

Department of Finance update on the Kruk review

A representative from the Department of Finance attended the meeting to advise members that the independent review of overseas health practitioner regulatory settings (referred to as the Kruk review) will be released on the 28 April to National Cabinet.

The review has identified a small subset of high-level recommendations which are ready for action now and the rest will require further attention and time. The review will likely recommend the following:

- removing duplication between regulators and agencies
- enabling more cohorts from trusted countries to be 'fast tracked' through competent authority pathways
- better recognition of overseas health practitioners' experience and skills
- providing greater flexibility in demonstrating English language competency
- improving workforce data and modelling, and
- removing or suspending labour market testing requirements for employers sponsoring priority health practitioners on certain visas.

Chief Executive - verbal update

[Expert Advisory Group on practitioner distress](#)

The high-level outcomes of this work have now been made public following the execution of a comprehensive media and communications strategy. The revised recommendations and proposed actions have also been published on the Ahpra website and can be accessed [here](#).

The Herald-Sun and the Australian ran articles about the findings and recommendations on Saturday 25 March following a briefing of selected journalists earlier that week. In the lead-up to this anticipated publicity, confidential briefings were held with members of the medical, nursing and midwifery, psychology and mental health communities, co-regulators, jurisdictions and the NHPO informing them of the work and seeking their support.

The practitioners who were interviewed as part of the work were emailed with an update about the project. Letters or emails were sent to the contacts for serious incident practitioners where available – either to the practitioner, or families, legal representatives, or employers of deceased practitioners to let them know of this work and the forthcoming media interest. Since sending those, the team have had conversations or email correspondence with about one-third who have followed up for more information or to discuss the work.

Regulatory Operations – verbal update

[Trans-Tasman mutual recognition](#)

An update from the Regulatory Operations function advised that of particular note this year is the large increase in Trans-Tasman mutual recognition (TTMR) applications which is impacting workloads as the TTMR have a 30-day legislated timeframe to finalise. It is largely driven by a less onerous assessment process for internationally qualified nurses in New Zealand.

Notifications and timeliness

Lengthy tribunal timeframes are continuing across Australia however there is a new VCAT President who is looking to improve the timeliness of tribunals and processes to speed up the finalisation of matters.

Transformation Program – verbal update

An update on the progress of the Transformation Program was provided. The Program aims to improve the experience of all applicants with a mid-year start date for system enhancement. The Program is delivering business and technology changes in stages.

Changing our core regulatory system will enable Ahpra to create one source of truth across all our regulatory activities and meet the increasing requirement for business intelligence, analytics and research capability.

It will also see an improved staff experience by providing a 'single practitioner view', simplifying requests for further information from practitioners and reducing manual administrative tasks and allow staff to focus on high value tasks.

Julianne Bryce

Chair

Professions Reference Group