

December 2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee meeting

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee (the Committee) publishes this communique on the Committee's [accreditation webpage](#). Please forward it to your colleagues who may be interested.

COVID-19

The Committee and Ahpra continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impacts on accredited and approved programs. Statements on, or information outlining, its plans for its accreditation activities will be published on the 'News and updates' accreditation webpage. The Committee was also party to the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum's [consensus statement on COVID-19](#), and the [National principles for clinical education during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

The spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant escalated quickly in 2021, and many states and territories experienced lockdowns and restrictions that impacted on education providers delivery their programs of study, including students' ability to attend face-to-face classes and placements. The Committee will monitor the COVID-19 Omicron variant once more information is made available on its severity.

Committee meeting

The 42nd meeting of the Committee was held on 14 December 2021 via videoconference. The Committee invited Mr David Copley, incoming Chair, to attend a portion of the meeting in order to welcome and congratulate him on his role.

Some activities that were discussed at the Committee's December 2021 meeting, as well as some other key activities for the Committee, are outlined more thoroughly below.

Committee membership

Terms commencing in 2022

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia (National Board) recently considered proposals for appointment to Committee's next term from 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2024. Appointments for the next term will be announced early in 2022, and information on the members will be available on the Committee's [membership webpage](#).

Farewell to outgoing Chair Elaine Duffy

The current Chair, Adjunct Professor Elaine Duffy, has decided to not seek reappointment to the Committee. Elaine commenced her role as the inaugural Chair in July 2012 with her final meeting as Chair was December 2021. Since then, she has been integral in the development and implementation of the *2013 Accreditation standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice* and most recently the *2019 Accreditation standards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice*; and input into the National Board's *Professional capabilities for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners*.

Elaine was the Assessment Team Leader for eight accreditation assessments; an assessor for 36 monitoring responses or monitoring visits; and reviewed/evaluated 75 routine annual monitoring reports from education

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providers since 2017. Thankfully, Elaine plans to continue to provide her expertise as an assessor for the Committee, and will be an integral part of the succession plan in 2022 for the new term of the Committee.

Renee Owen, Chair of the National Board noted Elaine's dedication and hard work in the role since Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice became a regulated profession under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2012:

"Elaine has worked tirelessly and selflessly over a long period of time for the benefit of our profession. Elaine's efforts on the ATSIHPAC meant that the inclusion of our practitioners into being a regulated health profession was seamless, by ensuring that every program of study that was delivered across the country, understood what was needed and so was able to be accredited and approved for the purposes of registration. On behalf of the Board, I wholeheartedly thank Elaine for her hard work and collegiality and we wish her all the best in whatever comes next."

Helen Townley, National Director Policy and Accreditation at Ahpra said:

"As inaugural chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Accreditation Committee, Elaine has made an invaluable contribution to the Committee's work and the National Scheme overall, and will leave an enduring legacy. Thanks for everything Elaine – you'll be very much missed."

Simon Spence, Manager of Program Accreditation at Ahpra noted the palpable effect Elaine's absence would have:

"To say Elaine will be missed by my team is a huge understatement. In my nearly six years in this space, Elaine has brought an assiduous and unwavering dedication to the work of the Committee, and has done it all with a smile and relentless optimism. Her decades of work in indigenous health have helped her to shape a style of leadership that puts better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at the forefront. Her professional nous aside, working with Elaine has been one of the greatest honours of my career. She has taught me a lot, and I look forward to learning more from her in her continued work as an accreditation assessor for the Committee, and as a friend."

The Committee members and Program Accreditation Team wish to thank Elaine for her valuable contributions and service since 2012.

Assessment and monitoring activities

[Accreditation assessment underway](#)

The Committee must make accreditation decisions according to the National Law (Section 48) and the published [Guidelines for accreditation of education and training programs](#) (guidelines). There is currently one program undergoing an accreditation assessment and the Committee anticipates receiving a further three accreditation applications in 2022.

[2021 Routine annual monitoring](#)

At its December 2021 meeting, the Committee considered eight 2021 Routine annual monitoring (including COVID-19 reporting) reports; transition requirement reporting against the 2019 accreditation standards; and an update on education provider's 2021 graduating cohorts. The outcomes of the reports will be provided to the education providers and the National Board by February 2022.

In early November 2021, the Committee provided advice to the Board regarding the update received from education providers on their 2021 graduating cohort.

Terms of Reference

The National Board recently amended *Section 11: Membership* of the Committee's [Terms of Reference](#) (ToR). The National Board approved the amended ToR at its November 2021 meeting and these will be published on the Committee's accreditation page in early 2022.

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Ahpra and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Accreditation Committee work in partnership to accredit education and training programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice.

November 2021 Key Performance Indicators reporting to the National and Ahpra

As outlined in section 7 of its current ToR, the Committee must provide to the National Board reports and supporting documentation in accordance with the timeframes and requirements as identified in *Attachment F* of the ToR.

The Committee submitted its November 2021 Key Performance Indicator report to the National Board and Ahpra in early December 2021.

Stakeholder engagement

The Committee continues to engage with its key stakeholders, including education providers, around a range of topics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice accreditation.

The Program Accreditation Team, on behalf of the Committee, engages with stakeholders via the Committee's [accreditation webpages](#); through correspondence via email; phone or videoconference meetings, and communiques.

[SkillsIQ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Worker training package review – Committee engagement in consultations](#)

The Australian Industry and Skills Council (AISC) approved SkillsIQ, at the direction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Industry Reference Committee (IRC), to undertake a thorough review of all nationally recognised Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health worker training package products included in the HLT Health Training Package.

The Committee provided feedback on drafts at multiple stages across 2021 on the proposed revised HLT Health Training Package.

The Committee noted the recent [AISC communique](#) from the outcome of its 12 November 2021 meeting, and looks forward to hearing from SkillsIQ on any further action to be taken in relation to this important matter.

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