

## Professions Reference Group Communiqué

The Professions Reference Group (PRG) met via video conference on Wednesday 9 June 2021. The meeting was chaired by Nello Marino from the Australian Podiatry Association.

### The Professions Reference Group discussed the following:

- About 26,600 medical practitioners, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners have opted to stay on the pandemic response sub-register after its extension for up to 12 months to 5 April 2022 to help with the COVID-19 vaccination program rollout.
- Ahpra published its response – [Improvements made to notifier confidentiality safeguards](#) – following the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman's *Review of confidentiality safeguards for people making notifications about health practitioners*. All recommended improvements have now been implemented or are underway.
- Ahpra and National Boards are implementing the Health Council policy direction for the establishment of a new accreditation committee with the aim of finalising a proposal for chair, membership and terms of reference by July 2021.
- Almost 3,000 general practitioners eligible for fellowship have now applied and been granted specialist registration. They had until 16 June 2021 to apply to ensure continued access to Medicare rebates for their patients.
- The Nursing and Midwifery Board renewal period has gone smoothly this year. The late period for renewal applications ends on 30 June 2021. Changes to the renewal team structure which make senior staff available to assess adverse disclosures by practitioners has supported decisions or requests for further information being made sooner. The change is working well and will be incorporated into renewal campaigns for other professions.
- Operation Reset as a project, focused on internal and external education and engagement about the risk assessment and control framework is now complete. The focus of Ahpra's work is now on consolidation – ensuring staff and decision-makers are applying and building expertise in the application of this framework. Engagement by state and territory managers will continue to focus on sharing information about this work in each of the jurisdictions.
- The practitioner guide on the ['Preparation of a reflective report'](#) is available on the Ahpra website.
- The notifier support service, to start in August 2021, has been established to provide procedural support to notifiers in sexual boundary and sexual misconduct matters involving registered health practitioners. It aims to mitigate any potential additional trauma experienced by notifiers when reporting the matter to Ahpra. A trained professional will provide support to notifiers from the time a notification is made until it is closed.
- Ahpra is working on a joint project with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and health complaint entities (HCE) to explore the consumer and practitioner experience of the consumer health complaints system. A reference group has been set up with Ahpra CEO Martin Fletcher and the commission's Senior Medical Adviser, Dr Heather Buchan, as co-chairs. In addition to members representing the consumer perspective and HCEs, the Pharmacy Board Chair and National Boards representative Brett Simmonds, and the Australian Medical Association's Dr Chris Moy are invited as members to provide a practitioner perspective. The group's first meeting is scheduled in mid-July 2021 with plans to organise a consumer roundtable to explore consumer experience of the system, build knowledge and organise another broader roundtable later in the year to involve representatives from health professions.
- Work on the public register enhancements are progressing well. The initial phase ensures the register has a more prominent presence on the Ahpra website and its new design builds an improved overall search experience for the user. A demonstration video about the register's new features and

functionality is being developed and will be shared with PRG members near the end of July 2021, before the enhancements are launched.

- The next PRG meeting is on Thursday 29 July 2021, 2pm to 3pm.

**Nello Marino**

Chair  
Professions Reference Group