

AHPRA Report Edition 2, May 2011

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Update from the CEO

Welcome to the second edition of *AHPRA Report!* This is our regular update to everyone interested in the work of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

The period of May and June is one of our busiest times of the year as we manage the registration renewal of around 315,000 health practitioners across Australia – for some, their first time under the National Scheme.

AHPRA is in the process of aligning registration renewal dates nationally for practitioners. By 2012, nurses and midwives will be due to renew on 31 May, most medical practitioners will be due to renew on 30 September and all other registered professions (psychology, dental, podiatry, osteopathy, physiotherapy, optometry, chiropractic and pharmacy) will be due to renew by 30 November each year. During 2011, we are making the transition to these new dates, so this year the period of renewal and fees may be varied pro-rata to align with the new national dates by 2012. Nationally-consistent renewal dates will mean more comprehensive and accurate workforce data and greater simplicity in renewal processes.

AHPRA has expanded its direct contact to registrants to remind them to renew registration. This includes up to four email reminders (when practitioners have provided their email address) in addition to the mailing of a letter before registration is due. AHPRA will mail at least one letter before the end of the late period (when registration will lapse). AHPRA mails one letter after the close of the late payment period. To ensure practitioners receive these reminders, we are encouraging practitioners to make sure their contact details are up-to-date and to provide an email address.



AHPRA will use email to remind practitioners about important registration information and the National Boards will use it to communicate important issues for each of their professions.

The AHPRA and 10 National Board websites are an important source of information about the National Scheme. In early May, AHPRA launched a streamlined website to help make our online services easier to use and key information easier to find. The new-look AHPRA home page is the first step in upgrading the websites for AHPRA and the National Boards.

Key features of the improved website are:

- easy access to links to support practitioner renewals and access to online services
- a significantly improved search engine to improve access to information and
- improved navigation so information needed by practitioners and the public is easier to find.

The web upgrade is one of a number of service improvements underway in response to practitioner feedback. More information is available on [the AHPRA website](#).

In the past month, AHPRA has also focused on the [Senate Inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by AHPRA](#).

The [AHPRA submission](#) to the Inquiry highlights that the National Scheme is the most comprehensive and complex reform of health practitioner regulation ever undertaken in Australia. We acknowledged that there have been some significant start-up issues. However, we also emphasise that the fundamentals of the National Scheme are sound and that many improvements are well underway.

There are more than 528,000 health practitioners on the National Registers, 370,000 completed renewals, 38,000 new registrations and 81,000 students on the student register. Read [below](#) for a snapshot of AHPRA and the professions.

In analysing the submissions and listening to the public hearings, a common theme emerged: despite the early challenges, the vast majority of stakeholders continue to strongly support the move to the National Scheme. They are keen to work with AHPRA and the National Boards to deliver the best of it to the community, practitioners and the professions.

AHPRA is absolutely ready to meet this challenge. The best way to unlock the benefits of national registration is to work closely in partnership with our stakeholders towards this common goal.

AHPRA will be strengthening its direct relationships with national professional associations through a reinvigorated professions reference group.

AHPRA will also work with the professions and the community to develop a service charter. There are limited performance benchmarks built into the National Law in relation to registration and notification matters. AHPRA is keen to consult with our stakeholders on a robust framework to set clear and realistic expectations of our service to practitioners and the community. I look forward to your input.

Martin Fletcher
Chief Executive Officer

The health professions and AHPRA: A snapshot

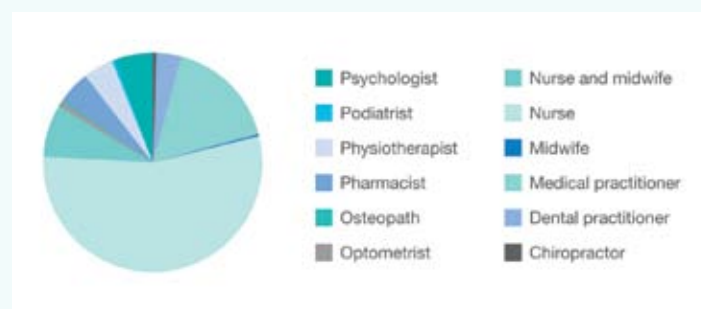
More than one in every 40 Australians is a registered health practitioner. One of the tangible benefits of the National Scheme is that it is now possible for the first time to know how many registered health practitioners there are in Australia at any point in time, within the 10 regulated professions. This kind of accurate and detailed information will be useful for workforce planning, among other purposes.

AHPRA's first [snapshot of the Registers of Practitioners](#), released in April 2011 (detailed by state and territory) reveals:

- there are 528,000 health practitioners registered across the 10 professions in the National Scheme
- there are 331,376 registered nurses and midwives, making these professions the largest of the 10 regulated under the National Scheme
- there are nearly 88,000 registered medical practitioners, nearly 29,000 registered psychologists, nearly 26,000 pharmacists, about 22,000 physiotherapists, 18,000 dental practitioners and between 1,500 and 5,000 registrants in each of the other five professions and
- New South Wales has the most registered health practitioners (156,000), followed by Victoria (136,500) and Queensland (close to 100,000).

Following are more numbers which capture the massive scope of national registration in this country:

- close to 315,000 registered practitioners are due to renew their registration in May and June 2011



- more than 370,000 health practitioners have renewed their registration since 1 July 2010
- more than 70% of practitioners who have renewed their registration since 1 July 2010 have done so online
- almost 38,000 health practitioners have registered for the first time since 1 July 2010
- there has been an overall increase in the size of the health workforce with a nett growth of almost 13,000 registered health practitioners since 1 July 2010
- there are around 81,000 students on the student register which began in March 2011; see our [story on student registration](#)
- more than 60% of registration applications which practitioners submit are incomplete – so AHPRA is increasing its communications efforts to help practitioners understand the new requirements of the National Law and
- 90% of phone calls to AHPRA are now being answered within four minutes and calls are now answered by the caller's local AHPRA office wherever possible.

Key Requirements of the National Law – At a Glance

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (the National Law)* as in force in each state and territory was shaped by the 65 Acts of Parliament it replaced. The National Law has set a new, nationally-consistent, and, in many cases, higher benchmark for public and patient safety.



Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Nursing and Midwifery
Optometry

Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

In developing the National Law, where one state or territory had an arrangement which protected public safety more than arrangements in other jurisdictions, Ministers largely chose to incorporate that provision in the National Scheme. Significant features of the National Law are summarised in the following table.

Feature	New requirement under the National Law
Registration related	
Student registration	Students in approved programs of study must be registered from the point set by the relevant National Board (except psychology)
Criminal history checks	Applicants for initial registration must undergo a criminal history check. National Boards may also require criminal history checks at other times.
English language skills	Practitioners must meet the English language skills required by the approved registration standard for their profession to be eligible for registration
Identity checking	Applications for registration must be accompanied by proof of the applicant's identity
Specialist registration	Separate registers of specialists are established under the National Law for the medical and dental professions
Endorsements for extended practice	National Boards may grant endorsements for scheduled medicines, acupuncture and approved areas of practice in specified circumstances
Standard registration categories	Before the National Scheme was introduced, registration categories varied between state and territory legislation and between professions. Under the National Law, there is a range of consistent and specific registration categories across professions against which transferring practitioners needed to be matched.
Renewal related	
Continuing professional development	Practitioners must undertake the continuing professional development required by the relevant registration standard for their profession
Professional indemnity insurance (PII)	Registered practitioners must not practise their profession unless appropriate professional indemnity insurance arrangements are in place
Recency of practice	Practitioners must meet the recency of practice requirements set in the approved registration standard for their profession
Registration expiry	If practitioners do not renew their registration by the end of the late period (one month after their registration expiry date), their registration will lapse and they will need to make a fresh application to become re-registered and be able to practise
Notifications related	
Notifications	There is a nationally-consistent process for managing notifications about registered health practitioners, and, in certain circumstances, registered students and for ensuring outcomes apply nationally
Mandatory reporting for students and practitioners	Practitioners and employers must notify AHPRA of notifiable conduct by registered practitioners that would place the public at risk of harm, such as practising while intoxicated. Education providers must notify AHPRA if they reasonably believe that a registered student has an impairment that in the course of the student undertaking clinical training, may place the public at substantial risk of harm

Graduate registration

Smooth the path from study to work...apply early, go online!

Students about to graduate as health practitioners can now go online to apply early for registration and smooth the path from study to work. AHPRA has introduced online registration for thousands of final year students who are about to graduate as health practitioners mid-year.

Most students will be able to complete their registration application online, while others will use the dedicated web pages to be directed to the correct application form. All applications require students to return some supporting documents to AHPRA by mail. We are encouraging all students graduating as health practitioners in mid-2011 to go online and follow the prompts to the registration pathway tailored to them.

Five Steps to Graduate Registration

- 1 Students apply for registration 4 to 6 weeks before completing their course at [Graduate Applications](#).
- 2 Applicants fill out an online application form (if eligible) or download a hard copy application form. All applications require some documents to be sent to AHPRA by mail.
- 3 Education providers advise AHPRA when applicants are eligible to graduate.



- 4 AHPRA finalises assessment, confirms registration, publishes new graduates' names on the Register of Practitioners and sends out registration certificates.
- 5 New graduates are registered and eligible to start working as soon as their name is published on the Register of Practitioners.

Further Information

- 1 Go to [Graduate Applications](#) on the AHPRA website for FAQs and links to more information.
- 2 Lodge an [Online Enquiry](#) at the AHPRA website.
- 3 Call our Customer Service Team on 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers).

The student register: now active

AHPRA delivered Australia's first national Student Register, with the support of registered education and training providers, in March 2011. While student registration is not new in all states and territories, AHPRA is pleased to welcome all health practitioner students to the National Scheme. All students enrolled in an approved program of study are automatically registered and are not required to pay fees.

Under the National Law, the Student Register is not public. The role of the 10 National Boards, in relation to students, is limited to student health impairment matters or when there is a criminal conviction of a serious nature (that is, punishable by imprisonment), either of which may adversely impact on public safety. National Boards have no role to play in the academic progress or conduct of students, which continues to be a core responsibility of educational providers.



Students will be registered from the first year of their course, except those studying psychology. The Psychology Board of Australia does not register students and is using provisional registration for this purpose. Psychologists wishing to apply for provisional registration must do so either at the beginning of the 4+2 internship program or their higher degree pathway.

The Student Register is dynamic and will continue to be updated to reflect student registrations around Australia. It was established through data provided by education providers to AHPRA.

The definition of *education providers* under the National Law is broad. It includes education providers delivering Board-approved programs of study leading to registration. It also includes education providers, health services and other organisations or individuals that provide clinical experience placements. This includes people who are not enrolled in a Board-approved program of study leading to registration, and are not registered in Australia in the profession in which they are undertaking the clinical experience placement. This includes students from overseas.

We will continue to refine the data exchange process to make this as smooth as possible, to minimise the administrative impact on education providers and support

them to meet their obligations under the National Law. To ensure the Student Register remains current, education providers must supply to AHPRA an updated list of all currently-enrolled students in approved programs of study after each academic census date for universities and TAFE, or at the commencement of approved courses for other training organisations; or provide student details at the commencement of clinical training that does not form part of an approved program of study, when the person does not hold registration in the health profession in which the clinical training is being undertaken.

For further information see the AHPRA website under [Student registration](#).

AHPRA people

Meet Bob Bradford, AHPRA's ACT office chief

A respect for change and how it should be managed is what drives AHPRA ACT Territory Manager Bob Bradford.

He embraces the challenge of implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

“We identified from the start that managing change for staff from different regulatory environments would be a key responsibility,” Mr Bradford said.

“I am very lucky to have 18 multi-skilled and vibrant staff working for me.

“Good staff will overcome any obstacle and the continued success we have achieved at the local level allayed any fears during early implementation of the National Scheme.”

Mr Bradford said the successful renewal of more than 370,000 health practitioners and improvements to customer service, which have included embedding customer service teams for practitioners within each state and territory AHPRA office, shouldn't be overshadowed by teething problems experienced in the early days of the National Scheme.

“The growth in the confidence of staff as they accept that we can do this mammoth task, in an often wary public environment, has been pivotal to AHPRA gaining a better understanding of the needs of multi-profession regulation,” he said.

“Communication with the health professions and other stakeholders was a major challenge early. The size of the change for some practitioners, especially after the concerted public and professional debates preceding the roll out of the National Scheme, was surprising.”



Mr Bradford said the need for all stakeholders, including staff, to accept and embrace the multi-professional regulatory scheme continues to be a major focus. But he is encouraged by the team environments that have been built both locally and at a national level.

“In the future I'm looking forward to growing enthusiasm from AHPRA staff and the National Boards for operating in a new regulatory environment in which traditional boundaries are less important.”

“We will continue thinking beyond our own office and our own profession. If a job is to be done, it won't rest solely in one office if a national solution can speed up the process.”

Eighteen years in health regulation and a problem-solving “can do” attitude developed while in the military – his specialty was logistics management – have led to Mr Bradford providing assistance at a national level in support of the new National Scheme.

This has included assisting in managing the 2010 national renewal of medical practitioners and developing the AHPRA legal services framework.

Mr Bradford is a member of the AHPRA Enterprise Bargaining Steering Group, the Legal Services Project, the Renewal Steering Committee and AHPRA's Executive Management Group.

“Good preparation for identifying and planning for possible problems beats hasty reactions to unforeseen circumstances,” he said.

“I believe that my 18 years in health regulation has taught me to react cautiously to changed circumstances and not to dance at shadows.”

From 1993 to 2003, Mr Bradford managed the 11 health professions boards in the ACT. During this time, he was heavily involved with the introduction of regulation to two new health professions, including the drafting of legislation, establishing the Board and providing secretariat support to the Boards once they were established.

He joined AHPRA after eight years as chief executive officer of the ACT Medical Board. As ACT State Manager, Mr Bradford has been responsible for transferring the operations of the 10 ACT Health Professions Boards and establishing the AHPRA ACT office, ready for the start of the National Scheme in July 2010, including the transfer of ACT health staff.

Mr Bradford holds a BA (Mil) (UNSW), a MSc (Def Stud) (Madras) and a Grad Dip Strategic Studies.

[Click here](#) to learn more about AHPRA state and territory managers.

Advice and information

Information online

Our [website](#) is a great place to start when you are looking for information on many different questions about the National Scheme. Try our new and improved search function to find the information you need quickly.

Email advice

Submit an [online enquiry form](#) any time and we will get back to you as soon as possible. There are categories of enquiries to select, reflecting the most common information requests, including getting your user ID and pass code reissued, or checking your application status.

Phone

Our customer service teams in each of our state and territory offices have a detailed knowledge and understanding of our rules, standards, guidance and advice. Call from within Australia on 1300 419 495 between 09:00am – 05:00pm local time or from overseas on +61 3 8708 9001 between 09:00am – 05:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time Monday to Friday.

State and Territory offices

AHPRA has an office in each capital city. [Contact details](#) are published on our website.

Publications and other information

National Boards produce registration standards, along with guidance and advice that expand on these standards, to support your professional practice. We publish detailed information on the National Board websites about registration standards and a wide range of general news and information relevant to health practitioners. You can access all publications through [the AHPRA website](#) which provides a portal to the websites of the National Boards.

Think before you print

Any comments?

If you have any comments about this report, please [email us](#).

Further information can be found on the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency website at www.ahpra.gov.au.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

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