

Message from the Chair

On 6 July 2015, the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council announced the reappointment of all the members of the Osteopathy Board of Australia (the Board) whose terms expire on 30 August 2015, and also an extension of my term as Chair. The reappointments are until 30 August 2018. A media release welcoming the ministers' announcement of these appointments is on AHPRA's¹ [website](#).

While other National Boards are experiencing changes of membership, our Board is unchanged and we continue with all [nine members](#). This stability provides opportunities to consolidate and grow our corporate knowledge within the Board, and as Chair, I greatly appreciate this.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Board in improving the regulation of osteopathy in Australia.

Dr Nikole Grbin (osteopath)

Chair, Osteopathy Board of Australia

Osteopathy Board news

Panels – express your interest

The Board invites osteopaths to express interest in being added to a list of panel members to be called on when a performance and professional standards panel or a health panel hearing is required.

These panels may be infrequent, but being involved is an opportunity to become familiar with the types of notifications that the Board receives and the legislation that governs osteopathy practice, decision-making and administration under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). It is also a good way to be introduced to the work of regulators.

There is training available for panel members once appointed. Appointments to the list of approved persons are currently advertised by the Board. For more information, visit the [Panel member recruitment](#) page on the AHPRA website.

The closing date is 26 August 2015.

Prescribing

The Board has recently contacted Osteopathy Australia, the Chiropractic and Osteopathic Council of Australia and representatives of the three osteopathic university courses in Australia to outline its position on a pathway to prescribing by osteopaths.

The Board's focus is both the protection of the public and the benefits to patients of osteopaths prescribing scheduled medicines, in terms of improving patients' access to healthcare and facilitating the development of a flexible and responsive osteopathic workforce.

The preliminary workforce, educational and policy aspects of an extended scope of practice rest with the osteopathic education institutions and the professional associations. If the Board receives a comprehensive case that establishes how prescribing of scheduled medicines by osteopaths will be of benefit to the Australian public, particularly in terms of cost effectiveness and safety, it could then develop a Board submission to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) seeking approval to endorse suitably qualified osteopaths to prescribe scheduled medicines. The Board will engage with Osteopathy Australia, the Australian Osteopathic Accreditation Council, and other key stakeholders to help build a case for submission to the Ministerial Council.

Prescribing is one of the cross-professional issues that the Board has taken the opportunity to explore with other National Boards. This is one of the benefits of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), and currently there are cross-professional working groups investigating prescribing of scheduled medicines by suitably qualified health practitioners.

If an application to the Ministerial Council for approval is successful, the role of the Board in regulating prescribing by osteopaths will include:

- approving accreditation standards and programs of study for prescribing practice
- considering applications for registration with an endorsement for scheduled medicines, and
- setting and monitoring the compliance of endorsed osteopaths with registration standards, codes and guidelines.

Return to practice and recency of practice

Osteopaths seeking to return to practice after a period of absence are required to comply with the requirements of the Board's [Recency of practice registration standard](#) and the National Law.

Osteopaths who have been undertaking some practice, but who have not completed enough hours in their main domain of practice in the required period, may still not satisfy recency of practice requirements. This may apply to an osteopath wishing to change domains – for example, to the clinical domain, where they have not completed the required 400 hours of clinical practice in the past three years.

¹ Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Osteopaths seeking to return to practice may be required by the Board to:

- have their competency to practise assessed
- practise under supervision
- complete specified amounts or types of continuing professional development (CPD) before returning to practice, or
- undertake any other activity specified by the Board.

A re-entry plan is drawn up to ensure that the practitioner is returning to safe practice with appropriate supports in place. This is for the safety of both patients and the practitioner. An osteopath proposes a supervisor and the re-entry plan (may include supervision plan) based on self-assessment. All the guidelines and relevant forms for supervision can be found under the [Codes and Guidelines](#) section of the [Board's website](#). There is also a fact sheet on [Satisfying recency of practice and returning to practice requirements](#).

What is the process?

If an osteopath has been absent from practice for five to seven or more years (the final decision is on a case by case basis), the Board may require a competence assessment as allowed under section 80(1)(d) of the National Law, before considering the application for general registration. This assessment is conducted by the [Australasian Osteopathic Accreditation Council \(AOAC\)](#). Depending on the individual case, the assessment may be a combination of either written and/or clinical exam, or the same standard pathway assessment used for an overseas qualified osteopath.

If a practitioner has less than seven years absence, they may still have to do a competence assessment if they have not practised for very long after graduation. The practical clinical exam component of the clinical competence assessment for an unregistered practitioner does not involve performing manipulation of the cervical spine as defined in section 123 of the National Law, but does include assessment of the safety knowledge of this technique.

Once a person has passed the AOAC competence assessment (stage 1), they are registered with conditions for a period of time during which they are directly supervised whenever performing cervical spine manipulation (stage 2); and then formally assessed for competence in the cervical spinal manipulation technique (stage 3); to be determined on a case by case basis.

Section 123 of the National Law provides that a person cannot perform manipulation of the cervical spine if the person is not registered in an appropriate profession (osteopathy, chiropractic, physiotherapy and medical) or is not a student who performs the manipulations as part of an approved program of study or clinical training. This restriction applies to the practical clinical exam component of a clinical competency assessment for those who are seeking to return to practice.

National Scheme news

Criminal history and English language skills registration standards have been revised

The registration standards for criminal history and English language skills have been revised following consultation and have been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. Both registration standards took effect from 1 July 2015.

Criminal history

The new criminal history registration standard makes minor amendments to the old standard, which is expected to have minimal impact on practitioners.

When a practitioner first applies for registration, the National Board requires the applicant to declare their criminal history in all countries, including Australia. All registered health practitioners must inform their National Board if they are:

- charged with an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more, or
- convicted or found guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment in Australia and/or overseas.

When practitioners renew their registration they must disclose any changes to their criminal history.

The new registration standard is published on the [Board's website](#).

English language skills

The new registration standard for English language skills applies to all applicants for initial registration, regardless of whether they qualified in Australia or overseas.

The new standard introduces additional pathways for applicants to demonstrate evidence of their English language skills.

The new standard was developed after a review of the existing standard, which included a public consultation. All National Boards, except the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Health Practice Board of Australia, consulted on and revised their English languages skills standard. The standards are now largely common across professions.

The new registration standard is published on the [Board's website](#).

AHPRA joins Facebook

Earlier this year AHPRA joined Facebook as another means by which we can engage with the public and practitioners. We'll be sharing similar content on Facebook that we do on Twitter: news from AHPRA and the National Boards, along with photos from events and forums.

Visit our [Facebook](#) page.

Improving monitoring of conditions on practitioner registration

AHPRA has welcomed calls for stringent monitoring and swift detection of breaches in compliance by registered health practitioners with restrictions on their registration.

On 24 March 2015, the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) published a report recommending a range of initiatives to strengthen monitoring and compliance in Queensland and the National Scheme.

'Regulation is all about managing risk to patients and we welcome all suggestions to help improve our work in public safety,' AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher said. 'These recommendations affirm the sweeping changes we have already initiated to strengthen our compliance and monitoring program.'

AHPRA's detailed response to the OHO and the recommendations in the report is published on the [Corporate publications](#) page.

Since July 2014, health complaints management in Queensland for registered health practitioners has involved a partnership between National Boards, AHPRA and the OHO.

Improvements to compliance monitoring add to the overhaul of complaints management in Queensland that started in 2012. Recent initiatives include preparation for stricter drug and alcohol screening announced in February 2015, the appointment of a national compliance manager and stronger national coordination of the compliance function.

For more information, please read the [media release](#) on AHPRA's website.

AHPRA actions to improve consumer and practitioner experience

Improving the experience of people who have made a notification has been a focus for AHPRA and the National Boards since early last year, when the Health Issues Centre of Victoria (HIC) was commissioned to conduct targeted research into the consumer experience when making a notification.

Since then a raft of changes to address the issues this research raised have been made, in particular to make written communication clearer and easier to understand.

Earlier this year, senior leaders from AHPRA and the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) met Australian Medical Association (AMA) leaders about the way notifications are managed – including decision-making protocols, guidance and policies.

Key issues include the time it takes for a notification to go through the process; the tone and clarity of communication; the need to better explain how the process works and why, and greater transparency wherever legally possible.

AHPRA will continue working on addressing the HIC's recommendations, and on other activities that will improve the overall experience of both consumers and practitioners who are the subject of a notification.

The latest update on this work is published on AHPRA's website: [Improving our work](#).

AHPRA welcomes ministers' response to NRAS review report

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council met on 7 August 2015 at the COAG Health Council meeting to consider the final report of the independent review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The purpose of the independent review was to identify what is working well in the National Scheme and the opportunities to improve and strengthen the operation of the scheme to regulate health professions to protect the public.

Ministers expressed strong support for the work of the National Scheme, noted that it was now embedded in the health system and was among the most significant and effective reforms of health profession regulation in Australia and internationally.

More information about the review can be found on the [COAG Health Council](#) website and on [AHPRA's](#) website.

Royal Commission on child sexual abuse

The Board and AHPRA have been following the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse and its implications for the regulation of health practitioners. The issues raised in the Royal Commission are serious and disturbing.

The Board and AHPRA are committed to learning from the evidence before the Royal Commission and its findings and are taking action to make sure our regulatory system is responsive to anyone who has been sexually abused by a registered health practitioner, who comes forward.

If you have a concern about a health practitioner call:

- AHPRA on 1300 419 495 (all states and territories except NSW and Qld)
- NSW – 1800 043 159
- Qld – 133 646 (133 OHO).

Contact the Board

- Visit www.osteopathyboard.gov.au for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ. Visiting the website regularly is the best way to stay in touch with news and updates from the Board.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [enquiries](#) link on every web page under Contact us.
- For registration enquiries, call the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) on 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- To update your contact details for important registration renewal emails and other Board updates, go to the AHPRA website: [Update contact details](#).
- Address mail correspondence to: Dr Nikole Grbin (Osteopath), Chair, Osteopathy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.