

Communiqué

December 2016 meeting of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The Board meets face-to-face each month to consider and decide on any matters related to its regulatory functions within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

This communiqué aims to inform stakeholders of the work of the Board.

Board appointment

Health ministers announced new member appointments in November 2016. The Board welcomed Ms Sally Cunningham to her first meeting with the Board. Ms Cunningham has been appointed as our new practitioner member from Victoria for a period of three years from 21 November 2016.

I look forward to working together with our Board members in 2017.

Revised competency standards development project

The Board is in the final stages of incorporating changes to the revised draft competency standards, and hopes to commence public consultation on the standards in early-2017.

Preparations for public consultation on the revised standards are well underway and the Board's consultants Carramar Consulting, who are delivering this project for the Board, will be holding focus group sessions around the country. The following focus groups are scheduled in early-2017:

- Hobart, Tuesday 17 January 2017
- Melbourne, Wednesday 18 January 2017
- Adelaide, Wednesday 1 February 2017
- Canberra, Thursday 2 February 2017
- Perth, Wednesday 15 February 2017
- Darwin, Thursday 16 February 2017
- Brisbane, Wednesday 1 March 2017
- Sydney, Wednesday 29 March 2017

Dates for focus groups in identified rural and remote locations around the country are yet to be confirmed.

The Board is keen to hear from occupational therapists working in a range of practice areas, settings and locations across the country. If you are interested in participating in one of the above focus groups, or in participating in one of the yet-to-be confirmed focus groups, please email otboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au. Your details will be recorded and we will be in touch closer to the date of your nominated focus group.

The Board notes that it is not always convenient for interested participants to take the time out to attend a focus group, and has built in a number of opportunities for stakeholders to be engaged. The Board will be holding webinars and will be publishing the public consultation material on its website for anyone who is interested in participating. Be sure to check into the Board's website regularly to see updates about the Board's work on this project.

The Board encourages all interested participants to take part in the review process and seeks your assistance in spreading the word about the consultation process. The Board notes that such wide-ranging consultation will help to ensure that the revised standards that are developed are reflective of the broad scope and depth of occupational therapy practice.

Return to practice pathways project

The Board is continuing to progress its *Return to practice project*. As part of this project, the Board has been piloting a survey with registrants who have returned to practice, to better understand registrants' experiences. The Board has been pleased that so many registrants are willing to share their experiences with the Board. The Board intends to use the lessons learnt from this survey to look at opportunities to better facilitate re-entry into practice.

The Board intends to release this survey on its website over the coming month, and invites interested participants to please email otboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au. Your details will be recorded and we will be in touch.

As part of this project the Board would also be interested to hear from supervisors to gain a greater understanding of the issues and concerns that may be experienced from a supervisor perspective. If you have been a supervisor of someone returning to practice the Board would also like to hear from you. Please email otboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au and we will be in touch.

Review of registration standards

Preliminary consultation on three of the Board's core registration standards – Continuing professional development, Recency of practice and Professional indemnity insurance – closed in early October. The feedback received was informative and constructive and the Board is thankful for the submissions received. The Board is progressing with refining the standards as a result of the feedback we received. The Board will be in a position to conduct public consultation on the revised standards early 2017 and looks forward to continued engagement with the profession on this review of the standards.

2015/16 National Scheme annual report

AHPRA and the National Boards have released their 2015/16 annual report on the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), which provides a comprehensive record of the operations of the National Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2016.

The key highlights for 2015/16:

- As at 30 June 2016 there were 18,304 registered occupational therapists, which represent an increase of 6.42% from the previous financial year and 7,922 registered occupational therapy students, which represents a decrease of 3.8% when compared to last year.
- There were 59 notifications received nationally (including data from the Health Professional Councils Authority in NSW), representing an increase of 20.4% from the previous year. Notifications about occupational therapists represented about 0.6% of all notifications received by AHPRA across all 14 health professions. The profession, therefore, continues to remain low risk when compared to other registered professions.
- AHPRA received six new complaints about possible statutory offences related to occupational therapy during 2015/16, which represents less than 1% of all statutory offence matters received by AHPRA.
- Across the scheme 98.07% of registered practitioners chose to take advantage of the online registration renewal process during the 2015/16 financial year.
- Improvements have been made to the way AHPRA works with the public and practitioners who are making or are the subject of a complaint of concern.
- A campaign aimed at employers, practitioners and the general public was rolled out nationwide.

For detailed data and information relating to the Board in 2015/16, please see the [2015/16 annual report](#). The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the Boards and highlights a multi-profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

Guidance on endorsements in relation to scheduled medicines

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council has recently endorsed *Guidance for National Boards: Applications to Ministerial Council for approval of endorsements in relation to scheduled medicines under section 14 of the National Law*.

The Guidance is designed to be used by National Boards when preparing applications to the Ministerial Council for approval of an endorsement for scheduled medicines within their profession.

The objectives of the Guidance are to:

- ensure robust, evidence-informed development and assessment of proposals for the use of scheduled medicines
- promote the safe and effective use of scheduled medicines
- facilitate common standards across professions for training and clinical practice with respect to the use of scheduled medicines, and/or
- facilitate nationally-consistent, core scheduled medicines authorities to enable innovation in health service delivery.

AHPRA and National Boards will be producing information for stakeholders to support the implementation of Guidance. This is expected to be published in early 2017.

The Guidance is published on the AHPRA [website](#).

Keeping in touch with the Board

The Board publishes a range of information about registration and its expectations of practitioners on its website at www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au. Practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policy and guidelines affecting their profession.

Julie Brayshaw

Chair

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

13 December 2016