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Chair's message

Welcome to the November 2014 issue of the newsletter from the Podiatry Board of Australia (the Board).

There are some important messages in this newsletter and I encourage you to take the time to read them. The Board held its October 2014 meeting in Sydney, which provided the opportunity for the Board to meet with local NSW stakeholders. These stakeholder meetings are extremely valuable to help inform the Board of issues that affect the consumers of podiatry services, as well as the podiatry profession.

In late October, the Board's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee had a meeting with the Podiatrists Board of New Zealand in Wellington. The two boards entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in 2011, with a view to maintaining an ongoing collaborative relationship, in the spirit of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA), which will serve to better protect the public. The two boards meet annually to exchange information about common issues about the regulation of the podiatry profession in Australia and New Zealand.

Cathy Loughry
Chair, Podiatry Board of Australia



Have you renewed your registration yet?

Registration renewal is due on 30 November 2014 for podiatrists and podiatric surgeons. The quickest and easiest way to renew registration is [online](#).

If you haven't already renewed your registration, remember to renew before 30 November. There is a late payment fee for renewal applications received in December, which reflects the cost of managing late renewals.

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), if you do not apply to renew your registration within one month of your registration expiry date your registration will lapse and you will not be able to practise in Australia until a new application for registration is approved. Your name must be removed from the Register of Podiatrists (and specialist register if you are a podiatric surgeon).

If you have provided an email address to the Board or AHPRA you will have been sent email reminders. If you have not provided an email address to the Board or AHPRA, you will have been sent a reminder in the mail.

A renewal FAQ is available on the Board's website.

Continuing professional development (CPD) reminder

Practitioners are reminded that when you renew your registration, you must declare whether you have met the Board's continuing professional development (CPD) requirements. The Board may refuse to renew your registration if the CPD requirements have not been met.

The Board's requirements for CPD are set out in the [Continuing professional development registration standard](#), which is available on the Board's website.

The Board's [Guidelines for continuing professional development](#) and FAQ's for CPD are also on the Board's website.

The Board encourages you to read these documents carefully to ensure that you understand your CPD requirements. You need to ensure that you have met these requirements by the time you renew your registration.

Graduate applications

AHPRA is calling for online applications from students who are in their final year of an [approved program of study](#). Students due to complete study at the end of 2014 are urged to apply for registration before completing their course.

An email reminder to apply early and online will be sent by AHPRA on behalf of the Board to final-year students on the Student Register. Applications can also be made by completing a [paper application form](#).

Podiatry students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#). Graduates must meet the Board's [registration standards](#) and need to be a registered podiatrist before they start practising.

Registrant survey

The Board will be conducting a voluntary and anonymous email survey of registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons in early 2015.

An important component of the Board's strategic plan, and its supporting work-plan, is its commitment to evidence-based decision-making. The Board has identified a number of potential projects for further consideration, including identifying areas where new standards, guidelines or policies may be required, and identifying options for more effective communications with registered practitioners.

In order to decide how to prioritise these projects, the Board is seeking your feedback through a survey. The survey may also identify other issues or priorities that the Board is not aware of.

By conducting this survey, the Board aims to get a better understanding of the podiatry profession's knowledge and understanding of their obligations as registered podiatrists or podiatric surgeons, the role of the Board and the future directions in podiatry practice, as well as identifying areas

where the Board might need to provide more guidance to the profession.

More information on how to participate in the survey will be provided early next year.

Infection control

Practitioners are reminded that effective infection prevention and control is central to providing high quality health care for patients and a safe working environment for those that work in healthcare settings.

The Board's [Guidelines for infection control](#) adopt the National Health and Medical Research Council [Australian guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare](#) (NHMRC guidelines).

The NHMRC guidelines were developed using the best available evidence at the time they were written, and they aim to promote and facilitate the overall goal of infection prevention and control. The [Board's Guidelines for infection control and the NHMRC guidelines](#) can be found on the Board's website.

Confidentiality of health records

Patients or clients have a right to expect that practitioners and their staff will hold information about them in confidence, unless the release of information is required by law or public interest considerations.

Health information is regarded as one of the most sensitive types of personal information. For this reason, the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Privacy Act) provides extra protections around its handling. For example, an organisation generally needs an individual's consent before they can collect their health information.

All organisations that provide a health service are covered by the Privacy Act. The Privacy Act regulates how these organisations collect and handle personal information, including health information. It also includes provisions that generally allow a person to access information held about them. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) also regulates the handling of health information held in an individual's personally controlled electronic health record.

State and territory legislation also continues to apply in relation to health records and information.

Practitioners must be familiar with the requirements of the Privacy Act as well as their state or territory privacy and health records legislation, including the provisions that govern the retention of health records.

Further information is available in the [Code of conduct](#) published by the Board in March 2014 and the Board's [Guidelines on clinical records](#). Useful information regarding privacy and health records legislation can also be found at www.privacy.gov.au.

When is it necessary to be registered as a podiatry practitioner?

The Board has published a document to provide advice to help practitioners decide whether or not they should be registered.

The document *[When is it necessary to be registered as a podiatry practitioner?](#)* clarifies the National Law requirements for registration as a podiatry practitioner.

Any practitioner who is qualified, meets the Board's registration standards and is otherwise eligible under the National Law may apply for registration.

Under the National Law, a person must be a registered health practitioner if they:

1. use the title "registered health practitioner" with or without any other words (s. 116 (1)(a))
2. take or use a title, name, initial, symbol, word or description that, having regard to the circumstances in which it is taken or used, indicates or could be reasonably understood to indicate, that the person is a health practitioner or is authorised or qualified to practise in a health profession (s. 116 (1)(b))
3. claim to be registered under the National Law or hold themselves out as being registered under the National Law (s. 116 (1) (c))
4. claim to be qualified to practise as a health practitioner (s. 116 (1)(d))
5. undertake a restricted act (which are specific dental acts, prescription of optical appliances and manipulation of the cervical spine and restricted to specified professions – ss. 121, 122 and 123).

It is up to each individual to decide whether or not he or she needs to be registered. As the primary purpose of registration is to protect the public, the Board considers that practitioners should be registered if they are providing treatment or opinion about the health of a person, including prescribing or formally referring to other registered health practitioners, or when a person may reasonably believe that the practitioner is registered.

Practitioners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the document and make an informed decision if it is necessary to be registered as a podiatry practitioner.

Public consultation – review of entry-level accreditation standards and competency standards for the podiatry profession

The Australian and New Zealand Podiatry Accreditation Council (ANZPAC) has started its scheduled review of the Accreditation Standards for Podiatry Programs for Australia and New Zealand and the Podiatry Competency Standards for Australia and New Zealand.

ANZPAC is the independent accreditation authority for the podiatry profession and undertakes the accreditation functions under the National Law, which includes accrediting education providers and programs of study for the podiatry profession in Australia and New Zealand. Entry-level podiatry programs are accredited using the entry-level program accreditation standards, which specify the criteria against which podiatry programs are evaluated. The ANZPAC podiatry competency standards are used for a range of purposes, including program accreditation, and describe the professional attributes and core competencies of entry-level podiatrists.

This review is being done to ensure that both sets of standards continue to represent contemporary best practice, benchmark well against other health profession standards nationally and internationally and remain relevant and effective over time. Throughout the review, ANZPAC is undertaking wide-ranging consultation and invites comments from all interested parties, including registered podiatrists.

As advised in our June 2014 newsletter, ANZPAC conducted an initial stakeholder consultation in May and June this year.

ANZPAC has incorporated its analysis of initial stakeholder feedback and other developments, and now seeks a second round of feedback from stakeholders on redrafted standards as part of its wide-ranging consultation process, as required under Section 46(2) of the National Law. Following analysis and incorporation of this second round of stakeholder feedback, ANZPAC will present a final version of the standards to the Board for approval under sections 46 and 47 of the National Law.

Details of the consultation are available on the [ANZPAC standards review webpage](#).

Submissions can be sent to standardsreview@anzpac.org.au and will close at 5pm on Wednesday 17 December 2014.

2013/14 National Scheme annual report

AHPRA and the National Boards have released their 2013/14 [annual report](#) on the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), providing a comprehensive record of the operations of the National Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2014.

This year, for the first time, AHPRA and the National Boards have also [published summaries](#) of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory. [Profession-specific profiles](#) will be released and progressively published.

The annual report provides a national snapshot of the work and finances of the National Scheme and is tabled in the parliaments of each state and territory and the Commonwealth. The 2014 annual report is an important reporting milestone and covers the lead-up to the scheduled independent three-year review of the National Scheme, now underway.

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

Health profession agreement

The Board and AHPRA have published the [health profession agreement](#) (HPA) that outlines the partnership between the Board and AHPRA, and the services AHPRA will provide to the Board in 2014/2015. The HPA also provides information about the Board's financial operations and fees.

Strengthening international criminal history checks

From early 2015, National Boards and AHPRA will implement a new procedure for checking the criminal history of international applicants for registration. The new approach aims to balance protecting the public without unnecessarily delaying the registration process for applicants.

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

Certificate of registration status now available online

New process makes it easy

Registered health practitioners can now request a certificate of registration status (CoRS) using the online AHPRA portal. In the past this was a manual process involving a form which was either posted or hand-delivered to an AHPRA office. Practitioners can now:

- apply online by [logging onto online services](#), or find out more information on our [Practitioner services page](#) of the AHPRA website, or
- apply using the [PDF form](#) (245 KB), which is available for download from our [Common application forms page](#) or the [Practitioner services page](#) of the AHPRA website.

There is a fee of \$50 for each CoRS.

What is a CoRS?

When practitioners are seeking registration or employment that requires them to be registered outside Australia, the regulatory authority in that jurisdiction may require a [certificate of registration status \(CoRS\)](#). This document is also referred to as a certificate of good standing or certificate of current professional status by some regulators.

The certificate provided by AHPRA:

- identifies the National Board and the recipient organisation
- lists practitioner-specific information including key registration dates, details of any current proceedings, suspensions, cancellations and/or any other relevant information, such as active conditions, undertakings, cautions and reprimands, and
- includes the date of issue of the certificate.

AHPRA offers a service to practitioners to provide a CoRS to regulatory authorities in other countries and some other approved organisations, including a number of specialist colleges. Approved organisations can be found on AHPRA's website under [Practitioner services](#).

The certificate is never provided to the requesting practitioner or to an employer, and can only be sent to an AHPRA-approved regulatory body or organisation.

These changes are part of our ongoing work with AHPRA to improve and streamline services for registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons.

National Scheme news

Regulatory principles endorsed for National Scheme

The National Boards and AHPRA have launched refreshed regulatory principles that will underpin the work of the Boards and AHPRA in regulating Australia's health practitioners in the public interest.

The principles are endorsed by all National Boards and the AHPRA Agency Management Committee and will guide Boards and AHPRA when they are making decisions. The principles encourage a responsive, risk-based approach to regulation across all professions within the National Scheme.

Regulatory decision-making is complex and contextual, requiring judgement, experience and common sense. The principles will further support consistent, balanced decision-making.

AHPRA and the National Boards will be seeking feedback on the principles in a formal consultation later in 2014 and will review them based on this feedback and 12 months' experience.

You can read the regulatory principles in a [media release](#) on the AHPRA website.

Data Access and Research Committee (DARC)

One of the objectives of the National Scheme is to protect the public by ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered. To achieve this objective AHPRA and the National Boards are increasing the use of data and research to inform policy and regulatory decision-making. Specifically, we're building organisational capacity for analysis, supporting external collaboration on regulatory research, and conducting or supporting high value regulatory research and analysis.

To do this well, we must effectively govern access to data generated by the National Scheme. We can provide access to de-identified data, as governed by the National Law and the relevant privacy laws and policies, but strict limits exist. These limitations are explained on the [AHPRA website](#), which also includes a downloadable data access and research [application form](#) for interested researchers.

AHPRA and the National Boards encourage applications from researchers whose projects aim to deliver regulatory improvement and health workforce reform.

New homepages for AHPRA and National Boards' websites

We have changed the homepages of the AHPRA and National Boards' websites, to make them easier to use and make it easier for users to find what they need.

The designs aim to make searches easier and more accurate and promote consultations and AHPRA's social media channels to make it easier for users to find the information they are looking for. The new designs are based on analytics data on how people use the sites as well as feedback from staff (including our customer service teams who receive calls from our stakeholders on where to find information on the sites) as well as members from our community reference group.

With the new homepages, users can:

- search the register with one click straight from the homepage
- go to the 'employer' or 'practitioner' tabs, which include links specific to these groups
- browse more news items without clicking through to a specific story, and
- know which website they are on at all times, even if they click between AHPRA and Board pages.

While the new homepages make an immediate improvement to the usability of the sites, there is still more work to follow. Work on the rest of the sites will begin later this year, which will include extensive consultation with a range of user groups, including practitioners, employers and members of the community.

Queensland – new arrangements for handling notifications from 1 July 2014

From 1 July 2014 a new law came in to effect in Queensland, the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*.

From this date, all complaints about Queensland health practitioners will be received by the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) who will either manage the matters or refer them to the relevant National Board to manage.

Complaints that were made to AHPRA or National Boards before 1 July 2014 will generally continue to be managed by AHPRA on behalf of National Boards. However, under the new law the OHO can request that a matter be referred to them to be managed. If this were to happen, AHPRA will inform both the notifier and the practitioner who is the subject of the notification.

For information about the OHO please go to www.oho.qld.gov.au or call 133 646 (133 OHO).

Contacting the Board

- The Podiatry Board of Australia and AHPRA can be contacted by telephone on 1300 419 495.
- More information is available on the [Podiatry Board website](#) and on the [AHPRA website](#). Ensure you keep your email contact details up to date with AHPRA in order to receive Board communiqués, newsletters and registration renewal reminders.
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- Mail correspondence can be addressed to: Cathy Loughry, Chair, Podiatry Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

