



Communiqué

Meeting of the Podiatry Board of Australia held on 25 February 2015

Stakeholder meetings

The Board met with local Victorian stakeholders to coincide with its February board meeting in Melbourne. This provided an opportunity for the Board and stakeholders to share information and discuss issues regarding the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) and local practice.

New specialist registration standard

The Board's new specialist registration standard took effect on 24 February 2015.

The *Registration standard for specialist registration for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery* sets out the requirements that must be met to be granted specialist registration to practise as a podiatric surgeon in Australia and the ongoing requirements to maintain specialist registration. The registration standard can be found on the Board's website under [Registration Standards](#).

The new standard was released in December so that practitioners could familiarise themselves with its content before implementation in February. All registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons were notified about the new standard when it was released.

Registrant survey

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

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.

The Board has decided that the assignment of priorities would be greatly assisted by a more complete understanding of the Board's operating environment, including through feedback from registered practitioners by means of a survey. This also has the potential to identify issues not currently known to the Board.

By conducting this survey, the Board aims to get a better understanding of the podiatry profession's knowledge and understanding of their obligations under the National Law¹ as well as identifying areas where the Board might need to provide more guidance to the profession.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law)

The Board encourages podiatrists and podiatric surgeons to take this opportunity to provide valuable feedback to the Board

Animated video for graduates

As part of its communications strategy, the Board has developed a short animated video targeted to podiatry students and graduates. The video, which will be launched soon, aims to raise the awareness of podiatry students and graduates of the standards they need to meet to become registered and also the professional standards they need to meet to maintain their registration. The video also refers to relevant guidelines and highlights the information available on the Board's website.

New approach to international criminal history checks

A new procedure for checking international criminal history that provides greater public protection took effect on 4 February 2015.

This approach requires certain applicants and practitioners to apply for an international criminal history check from an AHPRA approved supplier and was first announced in November last year. The supplier will provide the international criminal history check report to the applicant and directly to AHPRA.

The new process for checking international criminal history aims to strike a balance between public safety and regulatory burden for practitioners. More information is in the media release on the [Board's website](#).

National drug screening protocol strengthened

Mandatory hair testing for all registered health practitioners with substance-related impairment will now be routine in a move by AHPRA and the National Boards to strengthen the national drug screening protocol.

Under the protocol, all health practitioners who have restrictions on their registration linked to past substance abuse will have routine hair testing in addition to urine testing. Routine hair testing helps provide comprehensive information about the use – over time - of a wide range of drugs (not just based on the practitioner's drug taking history).

National Boards will continue to make decisions about individual practitioners with impairment case by case, based on testing standards set out in the protocol.

The drug screening protocol is part of a wider, national strategy to effectively manage compliance and monitoring across the National Scheme. The strategy has been progressively implemented from July 2014. More information is in the [media release](#) on the AHPRA website.

Further information

Further information about the Board can be found on its [website](#) and practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting their profession.

Cathy Loughry
Chair
Podiatry Board of Australia
5 March 2015