



Communiqué

Eighth Meeting of the Pharmacy Board of Australia 28 May 2010

The eighth meeting of the Pharmacy Board of Australia was held on 28 May 2010 in Melbourne. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*.

As in previous meetings, in its eighth meeting the Board focused on the issues to support the smooth introduction of the national registration and accreditation scheme on 1 July 2010.

Board Committees and Delegations

The Board has previously announced that there will be no State or Territory Boards of the National Board. Instead, it will be supported in its work to protect the public by a National Registration and a Notifications Committee. The committee will manage the individual registration matters and notification received by the Board, through a delegation from the National Board. The committee will be made up of four National Board members (two practitioner members and two community members) and additionally, the Board will appoint two practitioners from each State and Territory. The core committee will meet separately with each pair of jurisdictional members to consider the matters arising in that jurisdiction in accordance with the National Law. The Board appointed jurisdictional representatives from current State and Territory Boards to its Registration or Notifications Committee. Members will undertake training in preparation for consideration of registration applications and notifications referred to it from 1 July 2010.

The Board has also appointed external members to its Examinations Committee and Examinations Working Party. The working party under the direction of the committee will review existing oral examination processes used in all jurisdictions. As previously advised, current oral examination formats will be maintained in each jurisdiction between July and December 2010 and examinations conducted by current examinations staff under the direction of the Examinations Committee. These oral examinations will be scheduled in 2010 on dates published by the existing State and Territory Boards to minimise disruption to the current cohort of interns.

The Board confirmed that the written component of the registration examination (a three hour multiple choice question examination on pharmacy practice, pharmacy law and pharmaceutical calculations) will be conducted by the Australian Pharmacy Council via computer delivery at examination venues in capital cities which can accommodate this type of delivery. A pass in this examination will be valid for 18 months. Candidates will be advised further after 1 July 2010 on how to apply for this examination if they have not yet undertaken an equivalent written examination.

As previously advised by the Board, from 1 January 2011, the Board will conduct a national registration examination where for the first time, all interns across Australia will be examined using the same registration examination format comprised of the written examination and the new format oral examination.

Professional Indemnity Insurance Arrangement Standard

The Board submitted a revised proposal for its professional indemnity insurance arrangement standard to Ministerial Council on 19 May 2010. The Board believes that the proposed standard appropriately accommodates pharmacists in all practice settings, including pharmacists who practise exclusively in an employed position who would meet the standard by being indemnified by their employers whose policies meet the level of cover specified in the standard.

The standard also highlights the need for pharmacists to consider PII arrangements separate to their employer's arrangements in cases where pharmacists practise in locations other than their principal place of employment. The Board noted that in accordance with the definition of practice outlined in the standard, practice may or may not be remunerated and pharmacists who provide advice about medicines in situations not related to their employment arrangements must be indemnified and may require additional coverage to ensure compliance with the standard and the National Law. The Board also agreed to consider the need for the development of guidelines to support the PII standard. Ministerial Council will consider the proposal in June and the Board will advise the outcome on its website.

Guidelines

After a valuable consultation process, the Board is now finalising the following Codes and Guidelines which will be published on the Board's website in June 2010:

- Guidelines on advertising
- Guidelines on mandatory notification
- Code of conduct for pharmacists
- Continuing professional development policy

The Board has also published a consultation paper prepared by its Policies, Codes and Guidelines Committee on the following guidelines:

- Guidelines on dispensing medicines
- Guidelines on specialised supply arrangements
- Guidelines on practice specific issues

Written submissions must be lodged by close of business on Monday 14 June 2010. This provided a four week consultation period, however, late submissions cannot be accepted. The committee will subsequently review submissions and finalise these guidelines for consideration by the Board. The approved guidelines will be published on the Board's website.

Ownership of pharmacy businesses

Under the national registration and accreditation scheme, the Board will not regulate the ownership of pharmacy businesses. This function will be administered by separate entities established under individual State and Territory legislation. The Board is obliged to act in the interest of the public. Given the options for registration under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (2009) ('the National Law') include general and non-practising registration, the Board considered the possible pharmacy ownership arrangements by registered pharmacists and how this would impact on the public in terms of the delivery of pharmacy services. The Board also considered the following definition of practice adopted by the Board in its registration standards approved by Ministerial Council:

"Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a pharmacist in their profession. For the purposes of this registration standard, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes working in a direct nonclinical relationship with clients; working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles; and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession and/or use their professional skills."

As ownership of a pharmacy business is a role that impacts on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession and involves use of professional skills, the Board agreed to adopt a policy that prima facie, a pharmacist who owns a pharmacy is practising pharmacy. Consequently, from 1 July 2010, proprietor pharmacists will be required to maintain general registration as the National Law stipulates that pharmacists holding non-practising registration must not practise pharmacy. Consequently, proprietor pharmacists will be obliged to meet the Board's registration standards to maintain general registration including the requirements for professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development.

Mail out to registrants

The Board has written to all registered pharmacists about their transition to the national scheme. Most registrants should by now have received letters explaining their new registration type under the National Law and detailing the information about them that will appear on the online national Register of Pharmacists from 1 July 2010. If you have not yet received your letter, please contact AHPRA on 1300 088 590 to ensure your safe transition to the National Scheme. Please also make sure the contact details held by your current State or Territory Board are accurate and up to date before 30 June 2010.

Accreditation arrangements

The National Board and AHPRA are now finalising arrangements with the Australian Pharmacy Council for the accreditation of approved programs of study and for the provision of other services. This agreement will be finalised in June 2010.

Health profession agreement

The Board and AHPRA are also finalising a health profession agreement that details how AHPRA will support the Board and enable it to fulfill its primary role to protect the public. The agreement will be finalised by 30 June, and will include details of fees set by the Board. These will be communicated to individual registrants in July.

Suppression of registrant information from the public register

Under the National Law, the name, registration status and the suburb and postcode of the practitioner's principal place of practice must be published on the national Register of Pharmacists. However, the Board can decide not to publish information on the register if it believes the inclusion of the information would present a serious risk to the health and safety of the registrant. The Board has now agreed on a process for managing requests from registrants to exclude personal information from the public register. Application forms to request exclusion of information from the register are available from AHPRA and published on the Board's website at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au. The Board will review all requests case-by-case.

Stephen Marty
Chair
11 June 2010