



## Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project

### PROJECT UPDATE 30 MARCH 2009

The last three months have seen a number of developments in the implementation of the new National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the Health Professions. These have built on the achievements of the first seven months of the project (see December project update on this website).

**The consultation process** on issues to be covered in the national legislation for the scheme (known as Bill B) continued. On 22 January 2009 a sixth consultation paper was issued, this time on arrangements for specialists, and submissions closed on 13 February. There has been a tremendous response from existing boards, professional associations, and consumer and community groups to the six consultation papers. Around 565 submissions have been received.

A feature of this process has been the consistency of responses on many issues in the submissions. Clear views have been expressed, in many cases looking to improve on and amend elements put forward in the consultation processes. The submissions have been analysed and advice has been provided to Ministers.

On 5 March 2009 Ministers met in Melbourne to discuss **the main issues in the design of the scheme**. Ministers announced that they had made substantial progress, reached agreement on some elements of the design, reaffirmed their commitment to a new national scheme and committed to meet again after the Queensland election to consider further progress. The elements of the design that Ministers announced after the meeting were:

- “Mandatory reporting of professionals who are placing the public at risk of harm. This means that other practitioners or employers (like hospitals) must report conduct which puts patients at risk of harm, including practicing under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or sexual misconduct.
- Mandatory criminal history and identity checks for all health professionals registering for the first time in Australia. All other registrant will be required to make an annual declaration on criminal history matters when they renew their registration.”

It is expected that following further consideration of outstanding issues by Ministers, an exposure draft of Bill B will be made publicly available for a period of consultation prior to final decisions on the Bill.

Also on 5 March 2009, Ministers, acting as the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council, announced **appointments to the Agency Management Committee** for the new Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The members are:

**Mr Peter Allen** (Chair), formerly Under Secretary in the Department of Human Services, Victoria

**Mr Michael Gorton AM**, appointed as a member with business and administrative expertise, an executive partner with the Melbourne law firm, Russell Kennedy, and Chair of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

**Professor Genevieve Gray**, appointed as a member with expertise in health, or education and training, Professor of Nursing at Queensland University of Technology and recently a Nurse Scholar for the WHO

**Professor Con Michael AO**, appointed as a member with expertise in health, or education and training, currently President of the Medical Board of Western Australia, and Deputy President of the Australian Medical Council, and

**Associate Professor Merrilyn Walton**, appointed as a member with business and administrative expertise, Associate Professor of Medical Education, Director Patient Safety, University of Sydney, and previously the Commissioner for the Health Care Complaints Commission in NSW.

The first meeting of the Agency Management Committee will be held in Melbourne on 23 April 2009.

In relation to **information systems for the new scheme**, there have been a lot of developments with the completion of business process mapping, the ICT strategy, and the documentation of requirements for the registration system and requirements for data cleansing and migration. The first major tender was issued on 18 March 2009 and closes on Thursday, 16 April. This tender was for the registration information system which will underpin the new registration system and feed into the new national public register of health practitioners. Interest has been strong and 46 people attended a briefing on the tender on Thursday, 25 March in Melbourne.

On the **transition management** front, there have been a number of developments. Our final State and Territory Transition Manager has commenced work. These eight positions are funded by governments to support the work of the existing boards and the agency in managing the transition. A Transition Guide was issued to all boards in February 2009 and workshops held in each State and Territory. Regular meetings of boards and departments are held in the form of Transition Coordination Groups in each State and Territory.

In relation to the **staffing transition strategy**, discussions have commenced with the ACTU on the staffing strategy put to boards in December 2008. The first meeting between the project team and the ACTU and other unions was held on 17 February 2009 and discussions are continuing.

Through the ten months since the project began the project team has been immensely grateful for the engagement and participation of a large number of people across Australia. The support and collaboration among governments, the interest and contribution from existing boards and the engagement of the community, consumers and professional associations has been outstanding.

We look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming months.

Louise Morauta  
Project Director

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