

Paramedics Registration Project

Bulletin No 4 April 2017

Update

This update on the Paramedics Registration Project (the project) reports recent developments to enable national regulation of paramedics to commence around September 2018. It includes details of the pathways to registration for paramedics, approved by all State, Territory and Commonwealth Health Ministers (Health Ministers).

This Bulletin also includes reference to the outcomes of a national consultation held during February 2017, on general changes to be made to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (National Law). It also notes the process for appointments to the inaugural Paramedicine Board of Australia.

Finally the Bulletin discusses the National Code of Conduct for health care workers (the National Code of Conduct), and 'code-regulation' powers which currently apply to paramedics in several States.

National Law amendments and pathways to registration

Amendments to the National Law have been drafted in accordance with the policy decisions taken by Health Ministers on 7 October 2016 that:

- A national Paramedicine Board of Australia (the Paramedicine Board) will be established.
- Use of the title 'paramedic' will be restricted to persons registered by the Paramedicine Board. A communication strategy will be developed by the National Board and AHPRA so that the public is aware that a person using other titles such as 'medic' is not a registered paramedic.
- There will be several pathways to registration. Applicants will be qualified for general registration if:
 - they hold a qualification for registration 'approved' by the National Board; or
 - they hold an 'accepted' qualification – a Diploma of Paramedical Science delivered by the Ambulance Service of NSW; or
 - they are working or have previously worked as a paramedic and do not meet the new qualification standard required by the Board but do have a mix of qualifications and experience, or sufficient experience on its own in a paramedic role over the ten years prior to the commencement of registration, and can establish to the Board's satisfaction that they are competent to practice.

All applicants for registration must also meet the core registration standards to be developed by the Paramedicine Board. These standards will set out requirements for continuing professional education, professional indemnity insurance, English language skills, recency of practice, and criminal history.

Consultation

Targeted consultation with stakeholders around Australia on the proposed National Law amendments took place during February 2017. National and jurisdictional forums were well attended by paramedic representatives. Paramedic organisations also made written submissions.

Feedback was very positive, with some reservations expressed about preserving the Ambulance Service of NSW vocational qualification. A range of matters covered in the consultations were not specific to paramedics. They were about planned changes to the National Law, including Ministerial powers to consolidate governance of more than one profession under a National Board, and to appoint National Board chairs from any of the members, whether community or practitioner members. Note there are no current proposals for Health Ministers to exercise either of these powers. Further detail on general changes to the National Law agreed by Health Ministers is available at: <http://www.coaghealthcouncil.gov.au/Projects/Health-Practitioner-Regulation-National-Law-Amendment-Regulation-2017>.

Once Health Ministers have considered stakeholder feedback and approved the National Law Amendment Bill, it is expected to be introduced to the Queensland Parliament by mid-2017. Once passed, the Act is automatically adopted in most other jurisdictions. In Western Australian complementary legislation will need to be enacted. In South Australia the process will require amendment of regulations.

Appointments to the inaugural Paramedicine Board of Australia

Expressions of interest and nominations for appointment to the inaugural Paramedicine Board will be open for four weeks following public advertisement on 29 April 2017. From that date you can access the application form and information guide from the AHPRA board recruitment webpage: <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/National-Boards/National-Boards-recruitment/Board-member-recruitment.aspx>.

It is expected that Health Ministers will appoint nine members to the Board: six practitioner members who are paramedics, and three community members. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) will assist Ministers in the process of appointing Board members.

Appointments will be made by Health Ministers once the amendments to the National Law have passed the Queensland Parliament. When established the Paramedicine Board will work with AHPRA consulting the sector on registration standards for approval by Health Ministers, and will approve qualifications for registration

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purposes. This preparatory work will support the national regulation of paramedics expected to commence around September 2018.

National Code of Conduct

Until national registration commences, all paramedics will continue to be subject to the oversight of Australia's network of state and territory health complaints commissioners. The commissioners are currently working together to implement the National Code of Conduct for health care workers (the National Code). The National Code is also the result of an agreement between all Australian Health Ministers.

Statutory codes of conduct and 'code-regulation' (prohibition order) powers are already in place in four jurisdictions (NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria), with the remaining states and territories in the process of preparing the necessary legislative changes.

Paramedics who are regulated under state-based statutory codes are subject to minimum requirements for ethical practice. This includes a mandatory obligation to report any concerns that arise in the course of practice that the conduct of another health care worker is placing a member of the public at risk of serious harm. Regulatory actions available to those Commissioners who have code-regulation powers include the power to issue an enforceable 'prohibition' order to restrict or prohibit altogether a paramedic's ability to practice. Breach of a prohibition order is a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment.

Further details on the state based statutory codes and code-regulation powers are available as follows:

New South Wales: <https://www.hccc.nsw.gov.au/>

Queensland: <https://www.oho.qld.gov.au/>

South Australia: <https://www.hcsc.sa.gov.au/>

Victoria: <https://hcc.vic.gov.au/>

Further information

For more information on either the development of the National Code or national registration of paramedics please contact the project team as below:

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