



# COAG Health Council

meeting as the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council

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Dear National Board Chairs

## **Approval of revised recency of practice registration standards as recommended by 11 National Boards**

Thank you for your letter of 15 June 2015, advising that 11 National Boards have reviewed the current approved recency of practice (RoP) registration standards as part of a planned review of common and core registrations standards that have mostly been in effect since the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in 2010.

I am pleased to advise that pursuant to Section 12 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each State and Territory (the National Law), the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC) decided on 27 August 2015 to approve the revised RoP registration standards as submitted and recommended by each of the 11 National Boards.

Health Ministers welcome the approach taken by the 11 National Boards to jointly review the RoP registration standards to ensure there is as much consistency as practicable for registration requirements that apply to all professions regulated under the National Scheme. The National Boards' commitment to reviewing the revised registration standard at least every five years after commencement is also welcomed by Ministers as good regulatory practice.

Ministers commended the National Boards for their collaboration and use of an agreed standard template that has achieved a greater degree of consistency and convergence in requirements compared with the current approved registration standards that were developed and approved for the start of national regulation of these eleven professions. We recognise that there continues to be some profession-specific variance in requirements but that all National Boards have established pathways to return to practice, which reflect the characteristics and history of regulation of each profession.

Nevertheless, in future reviews of the common and core registration standards, Health Ministers encourage all National Boards to strive to achieve even more consistency in the requirements that must be met by health practitioners returning to practice after an absence, while ensuring that any revised requirements continue to protect the public. In particular, AHPRA is encouraged to continue to work with National Boards to undertake further research and data analysis to continually build the evidence base for regulatory policies, including for recency of practice requirements. We invite AHPRA to update Ministers on progress towards a strong evidence base, and its potential to inform the review of RoP registration standards that is currently underway by other National Boards.

Ministers agreed with the National Boards' proposal that the revised registration standards commence as soon as practicable. We understand that this will be approximately six months after approval around February 2016, and after advance notice of the revisions is given to health practitioners and other stakeholders. We note advice that implementation will require operational changes, some of which may involve complex changes to IT infrastructure and agree that AHPRA and the National Boards need to manage this transition carefully. We acknowledge that timing needs to take account of the annual registration renewal cycles for each of the eleven professions impacted by the revised standards, which may require adjustments to the commencement date of the revised standards for different cohorts of registrants.

Ministers are confident that implementation of the revised registration standards will be successful, and we invite the National Boards and AHPRA to keep us informed as work progresses. If any unforeseen challenges arise, please advise Ministers as soon as possible.

Ministers thanked the National Boards for also providing revised *Guidelines for RoP* which will commence at the same time as the approved revised registration standards.

We trust that communicating the AHWMC's approval today will enable the National Boards to manage a smooth transition and implement the approved revised RoP registration standards for commencement next year.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Jack Snelling

Chair

Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council

7 September 2015