

SIXTH MEETING OF THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA

25 MARCH 2010

At its sixth meeting on 25 March 2010, the Board made decisions about a range of matters that will impact on the transition to the national registration and accreditation scheme. This Communiqué aims to inform stakeholders of the decisions of the Board.

The Board noted progress towards commencement of the new national scheme on 1 July and noted that Bill C has now been passed in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory. It will shortly be considered in the remaining States. The Board is now awaiting the next meeting of the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council and its decisions in relation to assignment of the accreditation function and also approval of the accreditation standards.

Transition arrangements

April letter

In late April, the Board will be writing to every nurse and midwife currently registered in Australia to advise them of the new scheme and their new obligations. The letter will explain each registrant's registration type from 1 July 2010 and the process for transition into the new scheme. The letter will detail the information that will appear on the new national Register under the scheme. The Board is urging all nurses and midwives to make sure the contact details held by their current State or Territory Board are accurate and up to date before 30 June 2010.

The Board made a range of decisions about this transitioning process. In general, nurses and midwives will transition to the type of registration that matches their current registration. While the name of some registration categories will change, the Board has no intention to change any registrant's scope of practice. Please check the registration type allocated to you in the April letter and provide any feedback to AHPRA. Details about a phone number will be provided in the letter to contact AHPRA if there are any errors.

Conditions, undertakings and reprimands on the Register

The National Law requires the Board to publish conditions imposed and undertakings accepted from nurses and midwives on the Register. However, the National Law also allows the Board to decide to not record a condition imposed or an undertaking accepted when the nurse or midwife has an impairment, if it is necessary to protect the individual's privacy and if there is not an overriding public interest for the condition or the details of the undertaking to be recorded.

The Board decided to not routinely publish the details of conditions imposed or undertakings accepted as a result of impairment. However, in the interests of transparency, the Board will place the statement that the practitioner has conditions related to their health on the register. There may be circumstances when the Board will decide on a case-by-case basis to publish the details of some practice restrictions imposed due to impairment when there is an overriding public interest.

The Board is required to publish on the Register when a reprimand has been issued to a nurse or midwife. The Board decided that it will routinely remove reprimands from the registers after five years if there has been no other health, conduct or performance action against the practitioner during that period. This applies to reprimands issued after 1 July 2010.

Proof of identity

The Board recognises the need for a high level of assurance and integrity to identity checks for individuals as part of the registration process to increase public safety and to improve the identity security of individual registrants. The Board therefore approved an approach for authenticating the identity of an individual who applies for registration. This approach relies on a 100-point check, consistent with the Attorney General's standard. It applies to all new applications for registration from 1 July 2010. Applicants for registration will require their documents to be certified by an Authorised Officer. A list of class of persons that are Authorised Officers will be published.

Communications plan

The Board recognises that as 1 July 2010 approaches, it is necessary to increase the communication with stakeholders. The Board is currently developing a communications plan with the key features that include risk assessment and issues management, external communications, stakeholder engagement, government relations, media-management and consultation strategies.

State and Territory Board and Panel members

The Board encourages current State and Territory board members and members who serve on Panels to continue in their roles after 1 July 2010, to support the transition to the national scheme and ensure that their experience and expertise is retained. The National Board recognises the importance of regular and frequent communication with State and Territory boards and between those involved in similar activities in different states to ensure that the national scheme works effectively. The Board will shortly be writing to all current Board and Panel members about the future arrangements for State and Territory Boards size, composition and functions.

Accreditation

The Board is aware that accreditation is of significance to the nursing and midwifery professions and other parties who are awaiting decisions about this matter. At this point in time there is no additional information and the communiqué of 25 February 2010 provides the most recent information.

Budget

The Board further considered budget requirements and an announcement about the registration fee for nurses and midwives will be made shortly.

Matters being Highlighted by Stakeholders for Board Consideration

FAQs

The Board is aware of the growing concern that nurses and midwives have about details of the application of the registration standards. The most common questions being asked are related to continuing professional development; for example, the requirements for an individual who is both a registered nurse and a registered midwife to maintain dual registration. These and other frequently asked questions will be considered at a special meeting of the Board's Policy Working Group this month. This month the Board will also be refreshing its existing website as an interim measure to make it easier to navigate and improve registrant access to important information.

Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery Forum (APNMF)

Members of APNMF met with the NMBA after the board meeting to highlight a number of issues. It is anticipated that in the future the Board will be exploring the establishment of communication mechanisms with stakeholders to facilitate the tabling of issues for consideration by the Board.

Conclusion

There are an increasing number of decisions that the Board needs to make as 1 July 2010 approaches. The Board acknowledges that the transition to the national scheme involves potential risk. Individual nurses and midwives can help reduce this risk by reading the April letter from the Board carefully and making sure that all details are correct. As a preliminary step the Board encourages all registrants to ensure their contact details held by their existing State or Territory registration board are up to date.

Anne Copeland
Chair, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

1 April 2010