

Media statement

AHPRA widens investigation into practitioners at Victorian health service

16 October 2015

Australia's health regulators yesterday launched investigations into other doctors and midwives at the Djerriwarrh Health Service in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, after receiving an expert report raising concerns about obstetric and midwifery care at the service.

In late July 2015, AHPRA, the Medical Board of Australia and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia first learned of wider concerns about potentially avoidable perinatal deaths at the health service.

Immediately, AHPRA used its powers to require the Djerriwarrh Health Service to provide information to enable close regulatory scrutiny of care provided by registered health practitioners at the service.

AHPRA straight away commissioned an expert review of the information provided.

AHPRA received the expert report on 14 October 2015 and on 15 October 2015, the Victorian Board of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and the Victorian Board of the Medical Board of Australia initiated investigations into a number of registered practitioners who provided care at the Bacchus Marsh Hospital.

One of the long serving doctors at the health service had previously been subject to regulatory action because of concerns about his care of a mother after the still-birth of her baby at the hospital.

AHPRA acknowledges that it took longer than it should have to investigate that complaint, which related to a single case and the follow-up care provided to a mother after birth.

After receiving the complaint about the medical practitioner in 2013, the Victorian Board of the Medical Board of Australia investigated that doctor and then took regulatory action, imposing conditions on his registration requiring education and mentoring.

At the time, AHPRA and the Boards were not advised of abnormally high perinatal mortality rates at the health service, or about any concerns about that doctor's care of other patients, or concerns about the quality of obstetric or midwifery care provided at the Djerriwarrh Health Service.

The conditions were published on the public register of practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au from 25 June 2015 to 1 October 2015, when the doctor surrendered his registration and his name was removed from the register.

The Board did not refer the doctor to the tribunal because the available evidence, about his follow-up care of a mother after the birth of her baby, did not meet the threshold for tribunal referral.

The doctor has surrendered his registration and is no longer able to practise medicine.

AHPRA CEO, Martin Fletcher, apologised for the time taken to investigate the complaint about that doctor.

'Avoidable delays in the management of notifications are not acceptable, we have rectified the identified

shortcomings in our processes and will keep these under close review,' he said.

AHPRA conducted an exhaustive review of its management of the doctor's case, which found that improvements already made to AHPRA's notifications management had addressed systems gaps exposed in the management of the case.

The doctor advised the Board in July 2015 that he was no longer employed and as a result, there was no current employer for AHPRA to advise about the conditions imposed on his registration. These conditions were publicly accessible on the register of practitioners.

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (National Law) sets out the requirements for advising employers about the restrictions on practitioners' registration.

We are now reviewing whether there is scope in the National Law to communicate information about changes to practitioners' registration status to previous employers, in the public interest.

AHPRA encourages all health services to sign up to a service that automatically updates employers about changes to the registration status of any health practitioners they employ. Read more about AHPRA's [Practitioner Information Exchange](#) service.

Given there is ongoing regulatory action, the Board and AHPRA are not able to comment further at this time.

Media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200