

Media Release

9 August 2010

Registration standards in place to protect the public

Five weeks after its introduction, the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is ensuring consistent national registration and professional standards are applied in the regulation of the pharmacy profession.

Pharmacy Board of Australia Chair, Mr Steve Marty, acknowledged that introducing national regulation for 10 professions (including pharmacy) on 1 July 2010 was complex and represented enormous change in terms of process and legislation.

“Clearly there have been operational challenges which the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is addressing,” Mr Marty said.

“Registration applications are being processed. Thousands of registration renewal letters have been sent out to practitioners and more are scheduled. Interns are being granted provisional registration. Turn-around times are improving following a few initial delays,” Mr Marty said.

Mr Marty said it was important to remember the scope of the task involved in introducing the national scheme.

“For example, establishing a national register for each profession involved reviewing, cleaning and de-duplicating 1.5 million data records from 85 sources into one consistent data-set that reflected the National Law,” he said.

Other areas of impact have been the volumes of calls to AHPRA enquiries centres – averaging 3000 daily – and systems issues related to new processes, new legislation and a new organisation.

“AHPRA is managing the introduction of the scheme closely and responding daily to issues as they arise,” Mr Marty said. He also said that he had been in regular consultation with the AHPRA CEO, Mr Martin Fletcher, who has taken seriously the matters raised and is ensuring timely and effective changes have been made.

Mr Marty urged registrants with questions to go to the website (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au) as a first step.

He said it was also important that registrants understood the new registration standards introduced by the national scheme that every practitioner must now meet. Registration standards relate to criminal history checks, insurance, continuing professional development, English language skills and recency of practice.

“The Board’s role is to protect the public and these registration standards are designed to ensure that all practitioners have the qualifications and skills to provide safe care to the Australian community,” Mr Marty said.

He urged practitioners to be aware that the process of registering for the first time, which included authenticating criminal history declarations from an external source, could take some time.

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“Delays in processing registration applications can also occur when applicants do not provide all the information specified in the application form or information supplied is incorrect, I urge all applicants to read over their application carefully to ensure it is complete and accurate” Mr Marty said.

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