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Chair's message

Welcome to the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia's (the National Board) third newsletter. On 1 July 2013, the Chinese medicine profession celebrated its first year in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The Board's functions are to:

- register suitably qualified and competent practitioners
- develop and review standards, codes and guidelines
- oversee the assessment and investigation of notifications, and
- oversee the management and monitoring of registration conditions, undertakings and suspensions.

The Board works in conjunction with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to achieve all these requirements and more.

The National Board's Accreditation Committee has worked hard to develop draft accreditation standards and a draft accreditation process. These documents are in the final stages of the consultation process, and, once finalised by the committee and approved by the Board, will enable the Board's accreditation functions to continue.

Since the last newsletter in May the Board has published:

- *Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice*
- *Explanatory statement – Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice*
- Position statement: *Using a protected title, such as 'acupuncturist', under the National Law*
- *Agreed list of educational courses and units* – for the purpose of satisfying education registration condition requirements, and

- additional [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ) on:
 - > infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice
 - > patient records
 - > protected titles, acupuncture endorsement and holding out, and
 - > education registration conditions.

A review of the structure of the Board's [national committees](#) has also taken place, in line with the Strategic Plan. The Board reviewed the terms of reference and membership to improve efficiency and function.

In June the Board regretfully noted the resignation of Prof. Vivian Lin, a community member since the Board was first appointed. My heartfelt thanks, and the thanks of the National Board, must go to Vivian for her role with the National Board. The Board also welcomed a new community member, [Ms Esther Alter](#).

AHPRA and the 14 National Boards will publish the 2012/13 annual report in the near future. The annual report will provide more detail about the work of the National Board, financial outcomes and Chinese medicine-specific data on registrations and notifications. It will be available on the AHPRA website.



It is important that you keep up to date with developments that are relevant to you as a registered Chinese medicine practitioner in Australia.

Professor Charlie Xue

Chair, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia

Registration matters

Snapshot of the profession

The National Board's latest quarterly data update shows there are 4,070 registered Chinese medicine practitioners in Australia, 95 of which are non-practising. This is an increase of 71 practitioners in total since the last update in March 2013 (published in the May newsletter). Table 1 shows practitioner numbers by type and by state and territory.

Table 1 – Chinese medicine practitioners: state and territory by registration type (June 2013)

State	General	Limited	Non-practising	Total	% By State
		Teaching or research			
ACT	61		1	62	1.52%
NSW	1,644		5	1,649	40.52%
NT	10		2	12	0.29%
QLD	777	1	7	785	19.29%
SA	156		1	157	3.86%
TAS	33			33	0.81%
VIC	1,091		60	1,151	28.28%
WA	191		1	192	4.72%
Not Stated	11		18	29	0.71%
Total	3,974	1	95	4,070	

Table 2 shows registration numbers by division, with by far the largest number of registrants practising both acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine (1,941). There are 1,568 registrants practising solely as acupuncturists.

For further registration data, visit the [About>Statistics](#) section of the Board's website.

Table 2 – Chinese medicine practitioners: registration numbers by division, by state and territory (June 2013)

	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	Total
Acupuncturist	21	415	6	531	84	19	421	67	4	1,568
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Dispenser		1		3						4
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Dispenser and Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner	6	338		39	7		34	17		441
Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner	34	828	6	205	61	13	667	102	25	1,941
Chinese Herbal Dispenser		32			1		3	2		38
Chinese Herbal Dispenser and Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner		11			2					13
Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner	1	24		7	2	1	26	4		65
Total	62	1,649	12	785	157	33	1,151	192	29	4,070

REMINDER: 2013 renewal due soon

Chinese medicine practitioners across Australia are reminded that their registration is due for renewal **by 30 November 2013**.

We urge you to provide up-to-date email contact details to AHPRA so you don't miss the reminders to renew. Letters will be sent to practitioners who have not supplied an email address.

If you do not want to renew your registration to keep practising you can go online to 'opt out' of renewing. Using the 'opt out' service puts a stop to renewal reminders.

Renew online, on time

Make sure you renew your registration on time. The quickest and easiest way to do this is online. Look out for your reminders from AHPRA about six to eight weeks before annual renewal is due. They are confirmation that online renewal is open.

Renewal applications received by AHPRA **after** 30 November will incur an additional late fee. If you haven't renewed by one month after 30 November 2013, your registration will lapse. Your name will be removed from the public register. This means you must make a new application for registration and will **not be able to practise** until your application has been finalised.

FAQ about renewal will be available on the Board website when you receive your reminder to renew.

New graduate applications

Later this year, AHPRA will call for online applications from graduates who are in their final year of an approved program of study.

Chinese medicine students who will be completing studies at the end of 2013 are urged to apply for registration four to six weeks before completing their course. An email to individuals on the Student Register urging them to apply early and online will be sent by AHPRA on behalf of the National Board.

Applications can also be made by completing a paper application form. All applications, online or in hard copy, require students to post some supporting documents to AHPRA to complete their application. Chinese medicine students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under Graduate applications.

Graduates must meet the Board's registration standards and need to be a registered Chinese medicine practitioner before they can start practising. New graduates are registered and eligible to start work as soon as their name is published on the national register of practitioners.

Further information for graduates and potential registrants can be found in the FAQ section of the National Board's website.

Fees for 2013/14

In July, the National Board announced the registration fee for Chinese medicine practitioners for 2013/14. The Board limited increasing the fee to 2.4 per cent, which is just under the national consumer price index (CPI).

The fee schedule, including the fee arrangements for practitioners whose principal place of practice is in NSW, is published on the National Board's website under Registration>Fees.

The regulation of Chinese medicine is funded solely by registrant fees and there is no cross-subsidisation between professions that are regulated in the National Scheme.

The role of the Chinese Medicine Board of Australia and AHPRA

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), establishes a national registration and accreditation scheme (the National Scheme) for health practitioners of 14 health professions. There is a National Board for each profession. AHPRA is the single agency that supports the Boards and the National Scheme.

The National Law sets out the functions and powers of AHPRA and the 14 National Boards. The legislation can be viewed or downloaded from the AHPRA website under Legislation and Publications.

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) comprises the health ministers of the participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth. The Ministerial Council has a range of powers that include giving directions to AHPRA and the National Boards about policies they must apply in exercising their functions.

Objectives of the National Scheme

The purpose of AHPRA and the National Boards is to fulfill the objectives of the National Scheme. These are to:

- provide for the protection of the public
- facilitate workforce mobility
- facilitate the provision of high quality education and training of health practitioners
- facilitate rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas trained health practitioners
- facilitate access to services, and
- enable the continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable workforce.

The National Boards

The primary role of the National Boards is to protect the public and set standards and policies that all registered health practitioners must meet.

AHPRA's role

AHPRA is the agency that supports the National Boards in performing their functions. The Boards cannot enter into contracts and cannot employ staff. They rely on AHPRA to provide the human resources and infrastructure to enable the Boards to administer the National Law.

New guidelines and publications from the Board

Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice

Earlier this year the National Board published *Infection prevention and control guidelines for acupuncture practice*. The Board has adopted the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) *Australian guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare* (2010) (NHMRC guidelines) to inform registered acupuncturists on infection prevention and control.

The National Board's guidelines aim to direct acupuncturists to those parts of the NHMRC guidelines most relevant to acupuncture. The Board has also provided guidance to clarify areas that are either not specifically addressed by NHMRC guidelines, or where the Board believes additional measures should be taken to prevent and control the risk of infection.

All registered acupuncturists must comply with:

- the NHMRC guidelines
- the National Board guidelines, and
- relevant state, territory and local government requirements which apply to their place of business.

The National Board guidelines make specific policy statements and provide specific guidance on:

- reprocessing/reuse of critical items
- hand hygiene and alcohol-based hand rub
- the appropriate use of gloves
- the disposal of clinical waste
- skin preparation prior to skin penetration in acupuncture practice
- post-treatment considerations, and
- prevention and management of sharps injuries.

Practitioners must be familiar with their relevant state, territory and local government requirements. When an

inconsistency occurs with this document, the relevant state or territory requirements take precedence. A summary of current state and territory acupuncture requirements is included in the National Board guidelines.

To support these guidelines, the National Board has published [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ) and an [explanatory statement](#). The National Board also intends to publish a quick reference guide on infection control, which will also be available on the website.

Appropriate use of Chinese medicine protected titles

In September the National Board published a [position statement](#) and [FAQ](#) about protected titles, endorsement to practise acupuncture and 'holding out' under the [National Law](#).

Protected titles

Under the National Law there are specific titles which are 'protected titles'. This means that only those people who are registered, or endorsed, in a particular profession can use the titles associated with that profession.

The protected titles for Chinese medicine are *Chinese medicine practitioner*, *Chinese herbal dispenser*, *Chinese herbal medicine practitioner*, *Oriental medicine practitioner* and *acupuncturist*. As with all regulated health professions the National Law does not specify the activities that require registration, only that the title itself is protected.

Holding out

'Holding out' means to present yourself in a way that suggests to others that you are something or someone that you are not. A person who is **not a registered Chinese medicine practitioner** must not:

- use any of these titles: Chinese medicine practitioner, acupuncturist, Chinese herbal medicine practitioner, Chinese herbal dispenser, or Oriental medicine practitioner; or
- claim to be registered under the National Law, or
- 'hold themselves out' as being registered under the National Law.

The National Law also prohibits unregistered persons knowingly or recklessly taking or using a title, name, symbol, word or description that, having regard to the circumstances in which it is taken or used, indicates or could be reasonably understood to indicate that the person is a health practitioner, or the person is authorised or qualified to practise in a health profession.

Employers cannot knowingly or recklessly use any of the protected titles to make another person believe their employees are registered under the National Law unless the employee is actually registered in the profession.

These requirements apply whether the title is used with or without any other words and whether in English or any other language.

There are penalties for falsely using protected titles or holding yourself out to be a registered practitioner. Depending on the individual circumstances, a person may be investigated for holding themselves out, and prosecuted under the National Law.

'Holding out' can **also apply to registered health practitioners** who claim, or may lead a reasonable person to believe that they are registered in a different division or profession than they actually are.

Likewise, any Chinese medicine practitioner who is registered with conditions must not knowingly or recklessly claim, or hold themselves out to be registered without the conditions or any conditions.

Standards/conditions audit of registered Chinese medicine practitioners

AHPRA and the National Boards are developing a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards. Pilot audits have been conducted which were designed to determine the frequency, size and type of audits required and establish our audit methodology.

Each time a practitioner applies to renew their registration, they must make a declaration that they have met the registration standards for their profession. Practitioner audits are an important part of the way that National Boards and AHPRA can better protect the public by regularly checking these declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. They help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and provide important assurance to the community and the Boards.

Auditing of all professions has begun. If you are selected for audit you will be notified in writing and requested to provide evidence that you meet the requirements of the standard.

Further information will be available shortly on each National Board website.

The following web pages contain useful information for Chinese medicine practitioners in any division of the register, and for employers:

- [Chinese medicine registration standards](#) on the National Board website
- [Audit page](#) on the AHPRA website.

National Scheme news

Notifications guides published

In June, AHPRA published new guides for health practitioners and the community about how notifications are managed in the National Scheme. The [guide for practitioners](#) and a series of fact sheets explain to practitioners what happens when AHPRA receives a notification (complaint) on behalf of a National Board. The information complements the direct correspondence that individuals receive if a notification is made about them.

The practitioners' guide clearly explains what happens after a concern has been raised about a health practitioner, who decides what happens, how AHPRA works with health complaints entities (on behalf of the Board) and what practitioners can expect from those processes.

AHPRA has also developed a guide for the community about making a notification about a health practitioner. This guide for notifiers, [Do you have a concern about a health practitioner? A guide for people raising a concern](#), will be an early focus for feedback from the newly-established Community Reference Group for AHPRA and the National Boards.

Both guides are published online on the AHPRA and National Boards' websites in a wholly revised section on [complaints and notifications](#).

Community Reference Group

AHPRA and the National Boards have recently established a Community Reference Group, which had its first meeting in June 2013. This is the first time a national group of this kind, with a focus on health practitioner regulation, has been established in Australia.

The group has a number of roles, including providing feedback, information and advice on strategies for building better knowledge in the community about health practitioner regulation, but also advising National Boards and AHPRA on how to better understand, and most importantly, meet, community needs.

Members are listed on the [Community Reference Group Members page](#) and communiqués from the group's meetings are published on the [Communiqués page](#).

Professions Reference Group

The Professions Reference Group was set up in 2012. It is made up of representatives of the professional associations for the professions included in the National Scheme, including Chinese medicine, with participation from AHPRA's CEO and senior staff. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for AHPRA to brief the professions about its work and for the professions to ask questions about emerging issues relevant to regulation. The group also

provides expert advice to AHPRA in developing a range of information for practitioners, such as the recently published [notifications guide and fact sheets](#).

By working with the group, AHPRA has also been able to establish a practitioner consultative group, made up of individual practitioners nominated by their professional association who are willing to provide feedback on proposals and systems improvements, to inform change and improve services ahead of large-scale implementation.

Regulator logos on practitioner websites

Since implementation of the National Scheme, some practitioners have sought permission to reproduce AHPRA's logo or their profession's National Board logo on their business website.

AHPRA and the National Boards have a strict logo use policy and rarely grant permission for their logos to be used by third parties.

The roles of AHPRA and the National Boards in the National Scheme make it inappropriate for either party to endorse, or be perceived to be endorsing, individuals and organisations; their products or services.

Practitioners who have reproduced the AHPRA or a National Board logo on their business website should remove it and consider publishing a text link to www.ahpra.gov.au, advising that their registration to practise can be confirmed by checking the national register of practitioners.

Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit our website at www.chinesemedicineboard.gov.au for news about the profession, information on the National Scheme and for registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets.
- Read the [National Board Communiqué](#) each month on the website: these publications inform everyone of the decisions made at the Board's monthly meeting.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Prof. Charlie Xue, Chair, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

