



## ABORIGINAL HEALTH WORKERS BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY NEWSLETTER MAY 2008

### MEET THE BOARD

Mr Peter Pangquee	Chair
Ms Gwenda Gless	Member
Mr Shaun Tatipata	Member
Ms Karina Demasi	Public Member
Mr Darren Rogers	Public Member

### BOARD SUPPORT

Ms Jill Huck	Registrar
Ms Colette Pethick	Policy & Research
Ms Julie Burrows	Registrations
Ms Sally Ozolins	A/Complaints Mgr

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2008.

Another exciting and challenging year ahead as the training providers commence the new AHW qualification course and our profession gains further recognition for the contribution it makes to the health and wellbeing of the public.

I would like to thank firstly Mr Edward (Ted) Murphy whose term on the Board expired 13 May 2007. Ted made a very valuable contribution to the Board over the last three years. In addition my gratitude goes to Ms Gwenda Gless, whose term of appointment to the Board expires 25 May 2008. Gwenda has volunteered her time and expertise to contribute to achievements of the Board for five years.

A big welcome to Ms Karrina Demasi and Mr Darren Rogers who have both been appointed as public members of the Board by the Minister for Health. Karrina, who is a registered nurse, works as an educator at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Training and Education. Darren works as a Senior Aboriginal Community Welfare Worker, with Family and Children's Services. Both Karrina and Darren have a strong commitment to ensuring professional standards are maintained and strongly support the role of the AHW within the health care team.

It is with great sadness that the Board notes the passing of Mr Briscoe from Titjikala the first ever registered Aboriginal Health Worker (Registration # 001) in the Northern Territory and of course Australia. The profession will sorely miss this man and the Board's sympathy goes out to his family and community.

The Board's role is regulation of the profession, this means the Board is responsible for ensuring all AHW are of good character and work in accordance with the standards of the profession. The majority of AHW can be justifiably proud

that they are competent and are good role models to other AHWs and members of the community.

Should you have concerns in relation to your colleagues or your own competence or unprofessional behaviours, you are advised to discuss this issue with your manager and/or the Board.

I strongly encourage all Aboriginal Health Workers to develop an understanding of the *Health Practitioners Act* and familiarise themselves with the Board's policies and guidelines. For further information please refer to the Board's website:

[www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards) or contact the Board at the address on this Newsletter.

I hope this Newsletter provides assistance and guidance in your day-to-day practice. Please contact the Board if you have items of interest you would like the Board to address in Newsletters.

Best Wishes - Mr Peter Pangquee (Chair)

PS: if you know of anyone who has been an AHW in the past and who wants to return to work as an AHW please contact the Board to discuss how they may become re-registered.

### BOARD MEMBER VACANCY

On 19 June 2008 there will be an Aboriginal Health Worker Board Member Vacancy. Board membership is a professionally rewarding and challenging experience and remuneration is available for non-government employees. Please note the attached notice calling for Expressions of Interest.

### POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The following policies have been changed or developed or re-endorsed in the last 12 months, for further details please refer to the Board's website:

- Accreditation of Training Providers / Courses
- AHW Code of Ethics
- Evidence of Good Character (Charges / Convictions) Policy

### SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING DATES

Please note that applications for registration and other information that is to be considered at a

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Board meeting must be received no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date. The Board cannot guarantee that documents received after this date will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting. Late documents will be assessed for the level of urgency. Should your matter be urgent please contact the Board as soon as possible.

Meeting dates currently scheduled for 2008:  
**26 Feb. 20 May 19 August 18 Nov.**

### **New AHW Certificate IV Qualification**

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Training and Education (BIITE) and Central Australian Aboriginal Congress have commenced the AQF Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (Practice) qualification this year.

People who have successfully completed the AHW Certificate III (Clinical) qualification will remain eligible for registration, as an AHW in the Northern Territory as long as they can demonstrate have practised at some time in the last 3 years.

People who have continued to be registered as an AHW and who have not upgraded their 'Basic Skills' qualification will remain eligible for registration as an AHW in the Northern Territory as long as they can demonstrate have practised at some time in the last 3 years. The Board strongly recommends that this group of people upgrade their AHW qualifications.

### **MANDATORY REPORTING**

The role and scope of child protection activity is primarily prescribed by the principal child protection Acts in each Australian jurisdiction.

The ***Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*** was passed in the November 2007 Northern Territory Parliamentary sitting. The new Act provides a comprehensive approach that includes:

- Measures to prevent harm and exploitation of children;
- Strengthening of provisions to support families to care for their children;
- Extending the support for young person's leaving the Department of Health and Community Services, Chief Executive Officer's care;
- Provisions to move a child to a safe place;

- The introduction of screening for child related employment;
- The establishment of a Children's Commissioner, broadening the scope of regulated children services; and
- The establishment of Review Teams and a Child Death Review and Prevention Committee.

A planned staged implementation process is underway for the commencement of the different parts of the new Act, with the Children's Commissioner position currently being recruited.

For further information please refer to the government website:

[www.nt.gov.au/lant/hansard/hansard.shtml](http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/hansard/hansard.shtml)

### **KNOW YOUR ACT**

AHW and 11 other health profession groups are regulated under the *Health Practitioners Act* in the Northern Territory. The purpose of the Act is to ensure public protection.

### **Annual Practising Certificates (APC)**

**Most APC expire 30 September each year.**

Always keep your APC in a secure place and check the following:

- date on which your APC expires;
- accuracy of information on your APC; and
- conditions (if applicable) listed on the APC.

Please contact the Board immediately if the details on your APC are incorrect.

If you have Conditional Registration you must practice in accordance with the conditions stated on your APC. If you met the conditions on your APC eg: completed a Senior First Aid Certificate and/or a Competency Assessment please provide the Board with relevant certified evidence.

### **Annual Renewal of Registration**

Renewal of Registration forms are posted to registrants in August each year, additional forms will also be available from this office or the Board's website.

Non-receipt of a renewal notice is not an acceptable reason for practising unlicensed. It is important to note that non-receipt of a renewal notice is most often linked to the registrant's failure to notify the Board of a change of address.

Employers are reminded to ensure they have sound processes in place to ensure all AHWs and other regulated health profession

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employees hold current registration, at the time of commencing employment and by the renewal date each year.

**Practising Unlicensed**

Over the years the Board has become aware of a number of people who have practised unlicensed. Practising unlicensed for any period of time is a breach of Section 101 (1)(b) of the *Health Practitioners Act* and is: a risk to patients, practitioners and employers. In addition it may impact on your employment, alter your indemnity arrangements and impact on your employers entitlement to Medicare rebates.

Should you find yourself in this situation, it is in the best interest of your patients, yourself and your employer to rectify the situation immediately.

**s46 Notice of change of name or address**

A health practitioner must, within 30 days of changing his or her name, personal address or business address, give the relevant Board notice in writing of the change and the new name or address, as the case may be.

Failing to update the Board with changes of name / address details means that you will not receive any correspondence from the Board. In effect this means you will miss the opportunity:

- keep up with changes to policy;
- receive newsletters; and
- receive the application to renew your registration.

The Board seeks your assistance in ensuring that the name and contact details maintained on the database are current.

**s117 Employer notice of misconduct or incompetence**

If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the practitioner's employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person must provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the Board and to the practitioner.

**s118 Protection from Liability**

This section applies to a person who; makes a complaint; provides the Board with information; assists the Board with a preliminary investigation (including an assessment report or opinion); assists or provides information under Part 6; or assists or provides information to the Tribunal. This person is not civilly or criminally liable for

an act done by the person in good faith in taking an action referred to above.

**CONDUCT**

**Performance or Competence Assessment**

There were no investigations of possible unsatisfactory professional performance and no assessments of competence conducted in this period.

**Conduct Statistics**

**1 October 2007 to 31 December 2007**

Total conduct matters considered or otherwise dealt with by the Board	4
New matters notified in this period	2
Part 4 Investigations	3
Number of complaints finalised	2
Notifications of possible impairment	1
Monitored impaired practitioners	1

**Compared with:**

**1 October 2006 to 31 December 2006**

Total conduct matters considered or otherwise dealt with by the Board	4
Part 4 Investigations	3
Number of complaints finalised	0
Notifications of possible impairment	0
Monitored impaired practitioners	1

**Performance or Competence Assessment**

There were no investigations of possible unsatisfactory professional performance in this period. There were two assessments of competence conducted in this period.

**Registration Statistics**

As at **31 December 2007** there was a total of 280 Aboriginal Health Workers registered to practise in the Northern Territory. Of these there are:

<b>255</b>	Full Registration
<b>25</b>	Conditional Registrations

**Compared with**

As at **31 December 2006** registered Aboriginal Health Workers statistics were:

<b>260</b>	Full Registration
<b>17</b>	Conditional Registrations

**Contact details**

Aboriginal Health Workers Board of the Northern Territory  
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Telephone +61 8 8999 4157  
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Email [healthprofessions.ths@nt.gov.au](mailto:healthprofessions.ths@nt.gov.au)  
Web: [www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards)