

Health insights

National registration of paramedics – registration standards

On 19 October 2017 the COAG Health Council announced the first appointments to the Paramedicine Board of Australia. The Paramedicine Board was established following amendments to the Health Practitioner National Law (the National Law) in September 2017. Together with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulations Agency (AHPRA), the Paramedicine Board will now begin work in preparation for the national registration of paramedics under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). The date on which registration will commence is yet to be prescribed, but will likely occur in September 2018.

One of the hallmarks of the National Scheme is nationwide registration standards. There are five mandated registration standards that all national boards, including the Paramedicine Board, must develop and apply. They are:

- Professional indemnity insurance arrangements
- Criminal history of applicants
- Continuing professional development
- English language skills
- Recency of practice

The Paramedicine Board will now work on developing the relevant registration standards that will apply to the paramedic profession. However, as a general guide, prospective applicants for paramedic registration should (in addition to having the relevant approved qualifications):

- Ensure they have appropriate professional indemnity insurance arrangements in place. Such insurance may be provided by an employer. Where this is the case, the individual should make enquiries with their employer to ensure sufficient cover is provided. Practitioners may also want to consider whether any 'top-up' or personal professional indemnity insurance is needed. For example, practitioners would want to ensure that they have coverage not only for civil claims, but also legal expenses cover for coronial inquests and disciplinary processes.



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- Be aware that the Paramedicine Board will conduct criminal history checks as part of the registration process. This will be used to determine whether the applicant is a suitable person to hold registration. Under the National Law practitioners also have a duty to disclose any changes in their criminal history when applying for registration and/or renewal of registration and they must notify their registration board within 7 days of becoming aware that they are being charged with an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more or are being convicted of or the subject of a finding of guilt for an offence punishable by imprisonment.
- Complete the required Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and keep a record of such. It is important that an up to date CPD log is maintained. AHPRA and the Paramedicine Board can audit practitioners to ensure that the CPD requirements are being met. The number of hours and types of CPD that will need to be completed will be determined by the Paramedicine Board, following a consultation process, and formalised into a CPD registration standard.
- Be able to demonstrate sufficient English language skills. As a general guide, if English is a second language and the qualification was taught and assessed in a language other than English, the applicant may be required to take an English language test.
- Have recent practice and be able to demonstrate an adequate connection with the profession. The specific requirements for recency will be determined by the Paramedicine Board and will likely depend on the level of experience of the practitioner and, if applicable, the length of absence from the field.

The requirement to comply with these registration standards is a continuing one. Practitioners should be aware that AHPRA do audit compliance with registration standards and disciplinary action may be taken against those who are unable to demonstrate compliance.

Once the relevant registration standards have been developed by the Paramedicine Board and approved by the COAG Health Council, it is anticipated they will be published on AHPRA's website. Those wishing to apply for registration as a paramedic will need to familiarise themselves with the specific requirements set out in the registration standards and ensure compliance in order to obtain, and thereafter maintain, registration as a paramedic.

Meridian Lawyers is well placed to provide advice to paramedics about all registration issues.

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY ASSOCIATE TIGHAN TOSEN AND PRINCIPAL MARIANNE NICOLLE. PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION.

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