

Media release

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The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia launched two major initiatives to support nurses and midwives and protect the public in 2015/16

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) introduced two major new initiatives to support nurses and midwives to provide safe care to the public during the past year, according to information published by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) today in its [2015/16 annual report](#).

The past year saw the NMBA commission the development of a national health support service for nurses and midwives, which includes a confidential telephone service and a website of up-to-date resources. The nationwide service is expected to be available from early 2017.

‘Our number-one priority will always be patient safety,’ said Dr Lynette Cusack RN, Chair of the NMBA. ‘One way we can protect the public is by ensuring that nurses and midwives have the health support they need to provide safe care. It’s important that they can access confidential advice on issues related to their health anywhere in Australia.’

The NMBA also commissioned a project to develop standards for practice for registered nurses, which included a review of existing national competency standards and consultation with close to 10,000 stakeholders.

‘These standards are contemporary, relevant and useful across all contexts of registered nurse practice,’ Dr Cusack said of the newly developed [Registered nurse standards for practice](#), which took effect on 1 June 2016.

The NMBA works in partnership with AHPRA to regulate nurses and midwives across Australia under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). The 2015/16 annual report produced by AHPRA, the NMBA and the other national health practitioner boards is a comprehensive record of the National Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2016.

More highlights of the past year include:

- **More health practitioners overall:** There were almost 20,000 more registrants in 2015/16 across the 14 regulated professions than there were last year, totalling 657,621 health practitioners nationally. Student registrations increased by more than 11,000 registrants year-on-year, totalling 153,710.
- **A simplified renewal process:** Online registration renewals reached a new high across all professions – with over 98% of all registrants renewing online and on time, making it easier for health practitioners to renew their registration each year.
- **Increased registration:** As of 30 June 2016, there were 380,208 enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives across Australia, an increase of 2.7% from the previous year. This contingent made up 57.8% of all registered health practitioners across the National Scheme.
- **More new applications for registration as an enrolled or registered nurse:** There was a 16.2% increase in new applications to register for these titles in 2014/15, totalling 28,854 registrants.

- **Increase in midwives holding an endorsement for scheduled medicines:** There was a 37.4% increase from last year on this contingent, with 250 midwives able to prescribe and order diagnostics.
- **Greater awareness of the National Scheme:** A nationwide campaign aimed at employers, practitioners and the general public rolled out across social media and in print advertising.
- **Growth in notifications:** There were 10,082 notifications received during the year across all professions, an increase of 19.7% nationally (representing 1.5% of the registration base). The top three notifier complaints related to clinical care (41.8%), medication issues (11.5%) and health impairment (10.7%). Just under half of all notifications were made by a patient, relative or member of the public. AHPRA closed 5,227 matters in the year.
- **Increase in new notifications about nurses and midwives:** In 2015/16 there were 1,942 notifications received nationally about nurses (an increase of 12.1% from last year) and 103 about midwives (an increase of 39.2%). These figures include data from the Health Professional Councils Authority in NSW.
- **Greater awareness around mandatory notifications:** There was a 23% increase in mandatory notifications in 2015/16 from the previous year across all health professions, with 519 made about nurses (up from 472). Data suggests that notifiers are making more appropriate mandatory notifications, having assessed that the risk to the public warrants the notification being made. AHPRA's awareness-raising campaigns aimed at practitioners and their employers may have contributed to this.
- **A significant court outcome for the year saw an imposter nurse jailed:** A joint investigation by AHPRA, other health agencies and the police led to the prosecution of a woman who [falsely claimed to be a registered nurse](#).
- **Just 6.5% of all statutory offence matters related to nursing and midwifery:** AHPRA received 87 new complaints about possible statutory offences by nurses and midwives in the past year. Almost all new matters related to the use of protected titles.

For more data and information relating to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia in 2015/16, please see www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016. The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the Boards and highlights a multi profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

'The regulation of over 660,000 registered health practitioners across 14 health professions and eight states and territories is an important task,' said AHPRA CEO Mr Martin Fletcher. 'There are many things to consider in regulation – but there is only one main focus, and that is public safety.'

Supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance can also be found on the annual report website.

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Expanded, profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

For more information

- Visit www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016
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