

## **Question on notice no. 6**

**Portfolio question number: Ahpra-2024.006**

**2023-24 Additional estimates**

### **Community Affairs Committee, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Portfolio**

**Senator Linda Reynolds:** asked the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency on 22 February 2024—

(1.Can AHPRA provide an update on the current average time taken to notify a Stream B candidate of an OSCE assessment date they can attend, considering reports of delays extending up to five months or more?

What measures is AHPRA taking to address these delays and improve efficiency in notifying candidates of assessment dates?

2.In light of prolonged waiting periods for IQNMs seeking to emigrate to Australia as nurses, does AHPRA consider a wait time of five months or more for an OSCE assessment notification to be reasonable?

How Does AHPRA plan to mitigate excessive waiting times IQNMs seeking registration?

3.What is the current backlog of IQNMs awaiting the OSCE assessment?

What specific steps is AHPRA taking to reduce this backlog and expedite the assessment process for applicants?

4.Why does AHPRA schedule only five OSCE assessments per year?

Is AHPRA considering increasing the frequency of the OSCE assessments to meet the demand and reduce waiting times?

5.What is the typical cohort size for each OSCE assessment?

How does AHPRA determine the optimal cohort size, and is it considering adjustments to accommodate more candidates?

6.How many IQNMs typically attend each OSCE assessment?

7.Why are OSCE assessments currently only held in Adelaide?

Is AHPRA exploring the possibility of opening additional assessment centres in other locations to better serve applicants?

8.Is AHPRA aware of the significant financial burden faced by IQNMs seeking Stream B registration, which can amount to approximately \$17,000? This figure encompasses various expenses including the \$4,000 AHPRA registration fee, a \$500 USD NCLEX exam fee, travel and accommodation costs over \$1,000 to attend the NCLEX exam, an additional \$4,000 AHPRA charge for the OSCE assessment, potential expenses exceeding \$4,000 for return flights to Adelaide, one weeks

accommodation and car hire for the assessment, as well as the \$3,000 fee for the NCLEX and OSCE preparation course offered by the University of Notre Dame. Does AHPRA believe that the total cost of \$17,000 for Stream B registration is reasonable for IQNMs seeking registration

9. Is AHPRA aware of the competitive global marketplace for IQNMs, where recruitment incentives such as fast track registration, fee coverage and relocation benefits are offered by other countries or healthcare providers?

How does AHPRA plan to remain competitive and attract IQNMs to Australia despite these global recruitment efforts

10. Does AHPRA acknowledge that its current registration process, costs and timelines may create a disincentive for IQNMs to come to Australia?

- What strategies is AHPRA implementing to address any disincentives and ensure Australia remains an attractive destination for qualified international nursing

**Answer —**

Please see attached answer.

## **Senate Committee: Community Affairs Committee**

### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

#### **Additional Budget Estimates 2023-2024**

**Question Subject:** Lengthy delays in IQNM assessments scheduled by AHPRA

**Type of Question:** Written

**Senator:** Linda Reynolds

**Question:**

**Q1.** Can AHPRA provide an update on the current average time taken to notify a Stream B candidate of an Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) assessment date they can attend, considering reports of delays extending up to five months or more?

What measures is AHPRA taking to address these delays and improve efficiency in notifying candidates of assessment dates?

**Q2.** In light of prolonged waiting periods for IQNMs seeking to emigrate to Australia as nurses, does AHPRA consider a wait time of five months or more for an OSCE assessment notification to be reasonable? How does AHPRA plan to mitigate excessive waiting times IQNMs seeking registration?

**Answer:**

On average, candidates are currently being offered an exam date 8 weeks after payment is made and proof of being able to enter Australia is provided. Candidates can choose whether or not to sit an exam on the date that is offered to them.

Ahptra has increased the offerings for the OSCE from 5 times a year to 11 times this year by opening a second OSCE site in Melbourne. This has allowed for an increase of 1520 places totalling 3100.

Our target is to offer all candidates an exam date within 8 to 12 weeks of becoming eligible. Feedback from candidates is that this allows them time to prepare for the exam and arrange travel and accommodation.

**Q3.** What is the current backlog of IQNMs awaiting the OSCE assessment?

What specific steps is AHPRA taking to reduce this backlog and expedite the assessment process for applicants?

**Answer:**

There is no backlog. Currently there are 395 candidates that are eligible to sit the exam. This includes candidates who have earlier opted to not sit an exam on the original date offered to them. We expect to contact candidates in late March 2024 with an offer for the next available exam.

**Q.4** Why does AHPRA schedule only five OSCE assessments per year? Is AHPRA considering increasing the frequency of the OSCE assessments to meet the demand and reduce waiting times?

**Answer:**

There are 11 OSCE assessments scheduled for 2024.

**Q5.** What is the typical cohort size for each OSCE assessment? How does AHPRA determine the optimal cohort size, and is it considering adjustments to accommodate more candidates?

**Q6.** How many IQNMs typically attend each OSCE assessment?

**Answer:**

There are typically places for 240 candidates. The exam is run over four days a week (60 candidates per day). For the exam in April, we are conducting the exam over eight days to accommodate eligible candidates.

We will continue to monitor the number of OSCE candidates wishing to sit the OSCEs and will make days available, as able, to meet the demand.

**Q7.** Why are OSCE assessments currently only held in Adelaide? Is AHPRA exploring the possibility of opening additional assessment centres in other locations to better serve applicants?

**Answer:**

Since February 2024, OSCE assessments are held in Adelaide and Melbourne.

The OSCE is completed in a clinical simulation environment to ensure that IQNMs can meet the standard of practice expected in Australia and ensure a rigorous evidence-based assessment of clinical skills. The OSCE assessment centre in Adelaide was the first centre opened in 2021 to enable overseas trained nurses and midwives who were assessed as holding relevant but not equivalent qualifications (Stream B) to undertake the OSCE before they could be registered.

In November 2023, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and Ahpra announced that we had partnered with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) to use their Assessment, Learning and Examination Centre in Melbourne, Victoria for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives.

**Q8.** Is AHPRA aware of the significant financial burden faced by IQNMs seeking Stream B registration, which can amount to approximately \$17,000? This figure encompasses various expenses including the \$4,000 AHPRA registration fee, a \$500 USD NCLEX exam fee, travel and accommodation costs over \$1,000 to attend the NCLEX exam, an additional \$4,000 AHPRA charge for the OSCE assessment, potential expenses exceeding \$4,000 for return flights to Adelaide, one weeks accommodation and car hire for the assessment, as well as the \$3,000 fee for the NCLEX and OSCE preparation course offered by the University of Notre Dame.

Does AHPRA believe that the total cost of \$17,000 for Stream B registration is reasonable for IQNMs seeking registration?

**Answer:**

The published fees for IQNMs (stream B) for IQNMs seeking registration in Australia are:

IQNM assessment (assessment and orientation)	\$410
Multiple choice question (MCQ) exam for IQNM	\$250 USD
Objective Structured Clinical (OSCE) for IQNM *	\$4000
Application fee (payable once candidate passes OSCE)	\$318
Registration fee (payable once candidate passes OSCE)	\$185

\* An internationally qualified nurse and/or midwife (IQNM) must successfully complete Orientation Part 1 and a multiple-choice question (MCQ) exam prior to the OSCE. Fees for the Registered nurse and midwife MCQs are set by the MCQ provider.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia works with Ahpra to set fees to meet the costs of regulating the nursing and midwifery professions, without any government funding.

**Q9.** Is AHPRA aware of the competitive global marketplace for IQNMs, where recruitment incentives such as fast track registration, fee coverage and relocation benefits are offered by other countries or healthcare providers?

How does AHPRA plan to remain competitive and attract IQNMs to Australia despite these global recruitment efforts.

**Answer:**

Yes.

Ahpra is working closely with Commonwealth, state and territory health departments on the implementation of agreed actions endorsed by National Cabinet arising from the Independent Review of Health Practitioner Regulatory Settings, led by Ms Robyn Kruk AO.

Ahpra and the NMBA are also engaging with employers and recruiters to inform them of the requirements for registration in Australia to avoid unnecessary delays in obtaining registration.

**Q10.** Does AHPRA acknowledge that its current registration process, costs and timelines may create a disincentive for IQNMs to come to Australia?

What strategies is AHPRA implementing to address any disincentives and ensure Australia remains an attractive destination for qualified international nursing.

**Answer:**

In FY2023, Ahpra and the NMBA registered 273 internationally qualified midwives and 11,188 internationally qualified nurses – an increase from FY2022 of 127.5% and 148.1%, respectively.

Ahpra and the National Boards made a commitment to National Cabinet to develop options to streamline and accelerate the recognition of health practitioners' skills and qualifications to support a sustainable health workforce for the future. One area of this commitment focussed on improved assessment capacity and support. As the number of nurses and midwives seeking registration in Australia grows, having a second OSCE site enables the delivery of more OSCEs per year with the capacity to increase availability dependent on demand, and to lower wait times for candidates.