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## Message from the Chair

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2017 from the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board).

2017 is shaping up to be a busy year for the Board as we focus on achieving a number of milestones associated with our projects.

Public consultation on our project to develop a revised set of competency standards for the occupational therapy profession began on 16 January 2017 and we have built in a number of opportunities to engage with practitioners and consumers across the country. We are keen to hear from you and encourage you to spread the word to your colleagues about the current consultation process. The more feedback we receive, the better this will help ensure that the standards are reflective of the breadth of occupational therapy practice.

We are continuing to make progress on our review of the registration standards for continuing professional development, recency of practice and professional indemnity insurance. This work is part of a joint cross-profession review with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice, Chinese Medicine, Optometry and Psychology Boards of Australia. We hope to begin public consultation on the revised draft standards during 2017 and again encourage your participation through the review process.



During 2017 we will also be working on our *Return to practice project*.

As part of this project we will be examining the measures to make the current pathway more accessible to returning practitioners and exploring whether there are opportunities to create additional pathways for returning practitioners. We will be actively seeking feedback

from occupational therapists who have returned to practice and from supervisors who provide valuable assistance and support to returning practitioners.

Finally, the Board welcomes Ms Sally Cunningham (practitioner member from Victoria) on her appointment to the Board, which was announced by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council following its November meeting.

The Board looks forward to another great year ahead and encourages your input and participation in the range of activities that are planned for the first half of 2017.

Ms Julie Brayshaw  
Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

## Competency standards development project – have your say



Public consultation on the revised competency standards for occupational therapy practice began on 16 January 2017 and will close on 30 March 2017.

The Board wishes to engage with practitioners, interested stakeholders and consumers to better understand the suitability and applicability of the draft revised standards across the breadth of occupational therapy practice.

We have built in a number of different mechanisms for you to be involved in the public consultation process. You can provide your feedback through the [online consultation survey](#) or in a written submission emailed to the Board. Further information on providing a submission to the Board can be found on our [Current consultations page](#).

Focus groups have been scheduled in the following state and territory capitals and in selected regional areas:

- Perth, Wednesday 15 February 2017, 13:30-16:00 AWST
- Darwin, Thursday 16 February 2017, 14:30-17:00 ACST
- Brisbane, Wednesday 1 March 2017, 13:00-15:30 AEST
- Townsville, Thursday 2 March 2017, 12:30-15:00 AEST
- Albury/Wodonga, Tuesday 14 March 2017, 13:30-16:00 AEDT
- Bendigo, Wednesday 15 March 2017, 11:00-13:30 AEDT
- Sydney, Wednesday 29 March 2017, 13:00-15:30 AEDT
- Orange, Thursday 30 March 2017, 10:00-12:30 AEDT

Sessions in Hobart and Canberra have been cancelled due to insufficient numbers, but interested stakeholders from these locations will have the opportunity to participate in webinar sessions. These webinars are scheduled to occur on 22 February 2017 at 12.00pm–1.00pm AEDT, and on 22 March 2017 at 6.00pm–7.00pm AEDT.

Further details about the webinars can be found on the Board's [website](#).

The Board welcomes all interested participants to take part in the review process. We encourage you to spread the word as wide-ranging consultation will help to ensure that the revised standards are reflective of the broad scope and depth of occupational therapy practice.

Feedback on the public consultation is starting to be received, and this has included feedback provided during the focus group sessions in Melbourne and Adelaide. The Board has been pleased with the comments and looks forward to continuing to engage with you all on this important piece of work.

## Return to practice pathways project – we'd like to hear from you

The Board is continuing to review options to better support occupational therapists to return to practice after an absence as part of the *Return to practice pathways project*.

We are considering a number of alternative pathways for enabling practitioners to return to practice after a break. As part of the analysis we are examining how other National Boards within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) and comparable international regulators address and support practitioners returning to practice.

Following an examination of the literature and the approach of comparable regulators, we decided that formal examinations are unlikely to be a cost-effective option for returning practitioners. We are now considering other options, including the use of refresher programs for re-entry into practice.

In late 2016, we also conducted a brief survey of practitioners who had made contact with the Board about their experiences in returning to practice. We were pleased that so many occupational therapists were willing to share their experiences with the Board and we continue to encourage practitioner engagement on this project.

We are also interested to hear from supervisors to gain a stronger understanding of the issues and concerns that may be experienced from the supervisor perspective.

If you have recently returned to work, or have supervised a practitioner returning to practice, the Board would like to hear from you. Please email [otboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:otboardconsultation@ahpra.gov.au) and the Board will be in touch.

The Board is acutely aware that returning to practice after an absence is not always an easy process to navigate and is keen to ensure that any pathways that are developed for re-entry into the profession are accessible to assist with the transition back into the workforce.

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## Compliance with the CPD registration standard

The Board's *Registration standard for continuing professional development* (CPD) requires all practising occupational therapists to complete at least 30 hours of CPD per annual registration period.

Given that most of you would have already applied to renew your registration, it might be timely to remind you that it is important to do your CPD in a planned and purposeful manner. We encourage you to start planning your CPD now to ensure that the CPD activities you undertake help to maintain and extend your knowledge, expertise and competence in your practice. CPD is an important component in the provision of safe and effective services.

It is important the CPD you do is relevant and specific to your current or intended scope of practice and that you have goals that reflect this. You can then assess whether the activities you are recording relate back to these goals and scope of practice. The Board's CPD standard includes a range of formal and informal activities that can be counted towards CPD. Some examples of things that would *not* count as CPD include: fire or building evacuation training, general communication in the workplace or time spent compiling your CPD portfolio. If you are unsure about whether an activity counts, ask yourself whether by doing the activity you are developing or learning in relation to your scope of practice.

Audits of compliance with registration standards, including the Board's CPD standard, are conducted throughout the year, so it is important that you keep evidence of the CPD activities that you have completed over the previous five years in case you are selected for audit.

Please refer to the [registration standards, codes and guidelines](#) and [FAQ](#) on our website for advice about your obligations with respect to CPD. You can also view a [webinar](#) about all of the registration standards, which features some tips for keeping CPD records and preparing for audit.

## Notifications – communication

The Board would like to remind practitioners that under the National Law<sup>1</sup> anyone can make a complaint about an occupational therapist's health, performance or conduct.

In 2015/16, 59 notifications were received by AHPRA about registered occupational therapists, a number which represents less than 6% of the total number of notifications received by AHPRA across all registered health practitioners. This indicates that occupational therapy is still a relatively low-risk profession when compared to other professions within the National Scheme.

Poor or inadequate communication continues to be a common cause of complaints against occupational therapists. A critical part of the practitioner-client relationship is effective communication – this involves, among other things:

- listening to patients or clients, asking for and respecting their views about their health and responding to their concerns and preferences
- informing patients or clients of the nature of and need for all aspects of their clinical care, including assessment, and giving them adequate opportunity to question or refuse intervention and treatment
- discussing with patients or clients their condition and the available healthcare options, including their nature, purpose, possible positive and adverse consequences, limitations and reasonable alternatives wherever they exist, and
- ensuring that patients or clients are informed of the material risks associated with any part of a proposed management plan.

The above list is not exhaustive and we encourage you to review and consider the Board's [Code of conduct](#) in your everyday practice. The [Code of conduct](#) provides invaluable assistance and support for your occupational therapy practice.

## Declare all criminal history

The Board's [Criminal history registration standard](#) must be met when you apply and renew your registration with the Board. In order to meet the standard, you need to declare your criminal history, from Australia and any other country, which includes:

- every conviction for an offence
- every guilty plea or finding by a court for an offence, regardless of whether or not a conviction is recorded, and
- every charge made against the person for an offence.

All registered practitioners are also obliged under the National Law to inform the Board in writing within seven days if charged with, or convicted of, an offence punishable by 12 months' jail or more.

If you are unsure whether something needs to be declared, it is best to be candid and make full disclosures.

## Approved programs of study

Under the National Law one of the functions of the Board is to approve accredited programs of study as providing qualifications suitable for registration within the profession. The Board considers advice presented by the Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and New Zealand) Ltd (OTC) in considering whether a new or existing program of study should be accredited.

Approved programs of study are published on a [searchable database](#) on the AHPRA website. In accordance with the National Law, a program of study becomes an *approved* program of study once it is published on the AHPRA website and only then can it be used for registration purposes.

Please refer to the OTC [website](#) for further information.

## Snapshot of the profession

The latest quarterly data update, published in September 2016, shows there are 18,444 registered occupational therapists in Australia. New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland have the largest numbers of registered practitioners.

The table below shows a complete picture of registered occupational therapists across Australia.

**Table 1: Registration type by principal place of practice (PPP)**

Registration Type	General	Provisional	Limited	Non-practising	Total
Registration Sub-type			Postgraduate training or supervised practice		
ACT	331	2	4	5	342
NSW	5,022	14	25	132	5,193
NT	172	0	0	2	174
QLD	3,409	5	14	125	3,553
SA	1,360	6	2	66	1,434
TAS	273	1	1	13	288
VIC	4,415	9	21	126	4,571
WA	2,553	4	11	101	2,669
No PPP	159	0	0	61	220
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,694</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>18,444</b>

For further details about the make-up of Australia's occupational therapy workforce, visit the [Statistics](#) page on the Board's website.

<sup>1</sup> The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

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## National Scheme news

### Local insights, National Scheme: State and territory summaries published

Individual annual report summaries for each state and territory, offering insights into how the National Scheme is operating in each jurisdiction, have now been published.

Based on the AHPRA and National Boards annual report for 2015/16, the summaries are available [online on AHPRA's website](#).

Information includes applications for registration by profession, outcomes of criminal history checks and segmentation of the registrant base by gender, profession and specialty.

Notifications information includes the number of complaints or concerns received by AHPRA by profession, types of complaint, matters involving immediate action, monitoring and compliance, panels and tribunals, and statutory offence complaints.

To download any or all of the state and territory reports, or to view the main 2015/16 annual report, [visit our microsite](#).

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries that break down 2015/16 data by profession.

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## Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit our website for [news about the profession](#) and for [registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets](#).
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia).
- Address mail correspondence to: Julie Brayshaw, Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.