

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the latest newsletter of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board). This edition provides important information on the practitioner audit process and the Board's *Continuing professional development (CPD) registration standard*. We want to ensure you are collecting the necessary evidence in accordance with your annual declaration and registration under the National Law¹.

Practitioner audit is in progress

Our recent communiqués and news items have highlighted that audits to assess compliance with the registration standards for the profession are in progress. The [Audit](#) page on the Board's website provides comprehensive information about the audit process including guidance on the audit notice, what is being audited, what it means for you and contact details for the audit team and AHPRA customer service team should you have any questions.

We encourage you to read the article in this newsletter and visit the audit page to learn more about the process.

Practitioner and stakeholder engagement

This year the Board has continued to develop strong working relationships with stakeholders. Breakfast events have been held around the country and the Board's recent webinar and focus group session in Melbourne have also helped to ensure practitioners are well informed of registration requirements and provided opportunities for practitioners and employers to communicate directly with the Board.

Dr Mary Russell

Occupational Therapist
Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia sets fees for 2014/15

The national registration fee for occupational therapists for 2014/15 has been reduced by \$70 to \$160.

The annual renewal fee applies from 9 September 2014 and covers the registration period for most practitioners of 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015. The fee for occupational therapists whose principal place of practice is NSW, where a co-regulatory arrangement exists, has also been reduced to \$160.

The Board was able to lower the fee as it continues to better understand the cost associated with regulation now that it has been a part of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) for two years.

A fees schedule, including the fee arrangements for practitioners whose principal place of practice is NSW, is published on the National Board's [website](#).

More detailed information about the Board's financial operations is outlined in the [health profession agreement](#) between the Board and AHPRA for 2014/15, which is available on the board's website. This agreement sets out the partnership between the Board and AHPRA, and the services AHPRA will provide to support the Board to regulate the profession.

Update on the audit process

All registered occupational therapists are required to comply with registration standards that have been developed by the Board. The registration standards are published on each National Board's website under [Registration standards](#).

An audit page has been published on our website under the [registration](#) tab to keep occupational therapists informed and to provide information and tools to help if you are selected for audit.

Audits of health practitioners from all professions will occur periodically throughout the year.

Under the National Law, AHPRA (on behalf of the Board) can request you to provide evidence that you meet the standards, as declared in your previous annual statement. Your annual statement is made when you apply to renew your registration and includes whether:

- you have met the recency of practice requirements stated in the Board's registration standard
- you met the Board's continuing professional development (CPD) requirements during the previous registration period
- you have practised in accordance with the requirements of the Board's professional indemnity insurance (PII) arrangements registration standard, and whether you commit to practise in accordance with that registration standard if your registration is renewed, and
- there was any change in your criminal history during the previous registration period and whether you have any other criminal history matter that has not been disclosed to AHPRA.

Audits are an important part of the way National Boards and AHPRA better protect the public by regularly checking the declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. Audits help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and enhance the trust of the community in the profession by providing important assurances that practitioners are meeting their legal obligations.

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

What is the process?

The selection for audit is random. You may be audited at any time. If you are selected for audit you will be required to provide further information to support your registration declarations.

- You will receive an audit notice in the post, and a checklist that outlines what documentation you need to provide to demonstrate that you meet the standard(s) being audited. The notice will identify which standards are being audited.
- You will have four weeks to provide the requested documentation to AHPRA.
- AHPRA will review your supporting documentation against the declarations you made in your last renewal application.
- AHPRA may request further information and/or refer cases of non-compliance to the National Board or its delegated committee for decision.
- You will be advised by letter of the outcome of the audit.

Further information is available on the Board's website on the [Audit](#).

CPD focus – have you got records and a portfolio?

The Board's *Continuing professional development (CPD) registration standard* specifies that all practising occupational therapists must undertake a minimum of 30 hours per year of CPD directed towards maintaining and improving competence in occupational therapy practice. Please ensure you are working on CPD now and keeping CPD records to document details of activities completed.

In addition to a written CPD record, you must keep evidence of your completed CPD activities in a CPD portfolio. This evidence must be retained for five years and must be available for audit by the Board.

The 30 hours of CPD may be undertaken from a combination of activities:

- formal learning (max 25 hours)
- informal learning (max 25 hours), and/or
- contribution to the profession (max 10 hours).

The maximum hours apply across each category as it is valuable for you to undertake a diverse range of CPD activities, across at least two of the categories.

It is important to remember the CPD you undertake must be relevant to your current or intended scope of practice and be clearly linked to developing and/or maintaining competence in your practice.

Additional information and a CPD record template

In addition to the information contained within the *CPD registration standard*, further details are published on the Board's website under [codes and guidelines](#) and include:

- *Guidelines on CPD*
- a template example of a CPD record for occupational therapists
- a CPD fact sheet
- a flyer on your CPD obligations, and
- information about partial exemptions under the *CPD registration standard*.

Renewal of registration

The Board has launched its 2014 renewal of registration campaign and AHPRA has sent email reminders to occupational therapists who have provided an email address.

Occupational therapists should act now if their contact information has changed to not miss future reminders to renew. To update contact details visit the Board's website and use the appropriate link under online services for practitioners. A user ID and secure password is needed. Occupational therapists who have forgotten their user ID can complete a web enquiry form. Select 'Online Services - Practitioner' as the category type.

The registration renewal date for occupational therapists with general or non-practising registration is 30 November 2014. The quickest and easiest way to renew registration is [online](#). Renewal applications received during December will incur a late payment fee.

Under the National Law, occupational therapists who do not renew their registration within one month of their registration expiry date must be removed from the Register of Occupational Therapists. Their registration will lapse and they will not be able to practise in Australia. A fast track application can be made, but only during January. The occupational therapist cannot practise until the application is processed and the national register is updated.

Occupational therapists should read the Board's registration standards carefully before applying to renew as information in support of declarations made in an application could be requested.

A renewal FAQ is available on the Board's website.

Graduate applications

AHPRA is calling for online applications from students who are in their final year of an [approved program of study](#). Students due to complete study at the end of 2014 are urged to apply for registration before completing their course. Early applications can be processed by AHPRA and finalised when universities provide AHPRA with details of students who have completed their course requirements.

An email reminder to apply early and online will be sent by AHPRA on behalf of the Board to final-year students on the Student Register. Applications can also be made by completing a [paper application form](#).

Occupational therapy students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#). Graduates must meet the Board's [registration requirements](#) and need to be a registered occupational therapists before they can start practising.

Engagement with the profession

Practitioner breakfast forums

The Board holds interstate breakfast forums with practitioners to engage directly about national regulation and related matters and to hear from practitioners.

Breakfast forums for 2014 were held in Sydney on Friday 28 March, in conjunction with the Occupational Therapy Association NSW & ACT 2014 divisional conference, in Melbourne on 2 May and in Darwin on 20 October. The forums involved a presentation from the Board Chair, Dr Mary Russell, and included a Q&A with practitioners to assist with any queries about the National Scheme, and provided an opportunity for practitioners to meet the Board and to network with peers.

Breakfast forums are free events and open to all occupational therapists. The Board has considered these events a success, allowing the Board and practitioners to engage in a more informal setting. The Board intends to hold more breakfast forums over the coming year.

Board webinar *Staying up to standard*

On 21 July, Board Chair Dr Mary Russell presented a webinar entitled *Staying up to Standard*, which was attended by more than 900 occupational therapists across two sessions. In the presentation, Dr Russell recapped the registration standards, provided tips and templates for keeping CPD records and portfolios, and gave an overview of the evidence you will need to provide if you are audited.

A record of the webinar is available on the Board's website: [Staying up to Standard](#)

The recording includes 17 questions submitted by webinar participants during the two sessions. There were more questions sent through than could be answered on the live webinar, and responses have now been published on the [frequently asked questions](#) page of the Board's website.

The Board was pleased to see that the webinar was able to reach a wider audience. The Board sees this medium of engaging with practitioners as an effective way of ensuring that you are adequately informed of the requirements to comply with the registration standards that have been developed by the Board.

New and reappointed Chair and Board members

Health Ministers announced the new and reappointed Chair and Board members of the Occupational Therapy Board in June 2014:

- Dr Mary Russell - reappointed as Chair of the Board for a second term from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017
- Mr James Carmichael – reappointed as practitioner member from Queensland
- Ms Julie Brayshaw - reappointed as practitioner member from Western Australia
- Dr Katherine Moore – reappointed as practitioner member from New South Wales
- Ms Louisa Scott – reappointed as Community member
- Mrs Terina Saunders – reappointed as practitioner member from the Northern Territory

The appointments and reappointments are the result of the inaugural terms ending for members appointed by the Ministerial Council in 2011.

The Board extends very sincere thanks to all outgoing and previous Board members for their dedication to and work on the National Scheme, and for their contribution to the safety of the public by ensuring access to health practitioners who are safe and adequately trained and qualified. They are:

- Mr Andrew Taylor - Community member from Queensland
- Ms Amanda Bladen - Practitioner member from Victoria

The new Board members who were welcomed on 1 July 2014 for a period of 3 years are:

- Ms Kate MacRae - appointed as a practitioner member from Victoria
- Ms Roxane Marcelle-Shaw - appointed as a community member from New South Wales.

National Scheme news

Three-year review of the National Scheme

The independent review of the National Scheme is underway and a consultation paper is now [published](#).

The terms of reference for the review are published at [Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council website](#) under 'media releases' on the right-hand tab. The review – led by independent reviewer, Mr Kim Snowball – was built into the intergovernmental agreement that set up the framework and governance arrangements for the National Scheme. The agreement stated that the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) would initiate an independent review after three years of the National Scheme's operation.

The National Boards and AHPRA are actively participating in the review process.

Regulatory principles endorsed for National Scheme

The National Boards and AHPRA have launched refreshed regulatory principles that will underpin the work of the Boards and AHPRA in regulating Australia's health practitioners in the public interest.

The principles are endorsed by all National Boards and the AHPRA Agency Management Committee and will guide Boards and AHPRA when they are making decisions. The principles encourage a responsive, risk-based approach to regulation across all professions within the National Scheme.

AHPRA and the National Boards will be seeking feedback on the principles in a formal consultation later in 2014 and will review them based on this feedback and 12 months' experience. You can read the regulatory principles in a [media release](#) on the AHPRA website.

Data access and research policy

One of the objectives of the National Scheme is to protect the public by ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered. To achieve this objective AHPRA and the National Boards are increasing the use of data and research to inform policy and regulatory decision-making. Specifically, we're building organisational capacity for analysis, supporting external collaboration on regulatory research, and conducting or supporting high-value regulatory research and analysis.

To do this well, we must effectively govern access to data generated by the National Scheme. We can provide access to de-identified data, as governed by the National Law and the relevant privacy laws and policies, but strict limits exist. These limitations are explained on the [Data access and research page](#) of the AHPRA website, which also includes a downloadable [application form](#) for interested researchers.

AHPRA and the National Boards encourage applications from researchers whose projects aim to deliver regulatory improvement and health workforce reform.

New homepages for AHPRA and National Boards' websites

We have changed the homepages of the AHPRA and National Boards' websites to make them easier to use and make it easier for users to find what they need.

The designs aim to make searches easier and more accurate and promote consultations and AHPRA's social media channels to make it easier for users to find the information they are looking for. The new designs are based on analytics data on how people use the sites as well as feedback from staff (including our customer service teams who receive calls from our stakeholders on where to find information on the sites) as well as members from our community reference group.

With the new homepages, users are able to:

- search the register with one click straight from the homepage
- go to the 'employer' or 'practitioner' tabs, which include links specific to these groups
- browse more news items without clicking through to a specific story, and
- know which website they are on at all times, even if they click between AHPRA and Board pages.

While the new homepages have made an immediate improvement on the usability of the sites, there is still more work to follow. Work on the rest of the sites will begin later this year, which will include extensive consultation with a range of user groups, including practitioners, employers and members of the community.

Snapshot of the profession

The Board's latest quarterly data update shows there are 16,223 registered occupational therapists in Australia. This is an increase of 1,122 practitioners since the data update in June 2013.

See the table below for more information on the registered workforce, and for further details visit [About us](#) on the Board website.

Occupational therapists: state and territory by registration type (June 2014)

Occupational Therapy Practitioner	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP*	Total
General	254	4,446	135	3,024	1,212	258	3,863	2,307	100	15,599
Provisional	2	10	-	10	3	-	8	5	-	38
Limited (Total of Subtypes)	4	34	-	25	7	-	28	15	2	115
Postgraduate Training	4	34	-	24	7	-	28	15	1	113
Public Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching or Research	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Supervised Practice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Practising	1	102	2	115	76	5	77	70	23	471
Total Practitioners	261	4,592	137	3,174	1,298	263	3,976	2,397	125	16,223

*No principal place of practice

Keep in touch with the Board

- Our newsletters provide an important communication channel alongside our monthly Board meeting communiqués, media releases and news items published on our website.
- Make sure you keep your contact details with AHPRA current to receive important updates from the Board, such as registration renewal reminders. To update your contact details go to the [AHPRA website](#).
- The Board's website is the most up-to-date and reliable source of information on everything relating to the regulation of occupational therapy practice in Australia: www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au.
- The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia and AHPRA can be contacted by phone on 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- An [online enquiry form](#) is available on both websites under *Contact us*.
- Mail correspondence can be addressed to: Dr Mary Russell, Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

An easy way to keep up to date with the work of the Board is to register to [receive email updates](#) (you may opt out at any time).