

Chair's welcome

Welcome to the first edition of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia's (the National Board) newsletter. On 1 July 2012, occupational therapists joined the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) and became a nationally regulated profession.

The National Board is one of 14 Boards regulating registered health practitioners across Australia. For the profession, it means that new, nationally consistent registration standards apply, which all practitioners must meet. Under the National Scheme, practitioners register once, renew yearly (by 30 November) and can practise anywhere in Australia. For the public it means that they are better protected by ensuring that only health practitioners who meet the mandatory standards and who have the skills, qualifications and knowledge to provide safe care are registered.

The National Board has hosted a number of presentations around Australia to thousands of practitioners and community members since November 2011 and has breakfast forums scheduled for 2013.

Registering more than 6,500 occupational therapists for the first time was a massive task. The total number of registered occupational therapists in Australia now exceeds 14,000. The Board acknowledges the support of occupational therapists around Australia who made sure they were aware of registration requirements and lodged their applications early. The contributions of individual practitioners, the professional associations, employers and AHPRA staff were all important in successfully transitioning occupational therapists into the National Scheme.

Dr Mary Russell

Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

Introduction to Board members



National Board members from left to right: *Ms Julie Brayshaw – practitioner member from Western Australia; Mrs Louisa O'Grady – community member from South Australia; Mr Jim Carmichael – practitioner member from Queensland; Ms Louise Johnson – community member from Victoria; Mrs Terina Saunders – practitioner member from the Northern Territory; Dr Mary Russell – Chair and practitioner member from South Australia; Mr Andrew Taylor – community member from Queensland; Mrs Amanda Bladen – practitioner member from Victoria; Dr Katherine Moore – practitioner member from New South Wales*

Snapshot of the profession

Providing data that accurately reflect the number of registered practitioners is one of the important benefits of the National Scheme. In 2012 the National Board began publishing quarterly data on its website profiling Australia's

occupational therapy workforce, including a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants.

These data could not have been easily collated and reported before the advent of the National Scheme.

Statistical data are regularly published in the *About us* section of the National Board's website.

Occupational therapy practitioners: state and territory by registration type (December 2012)

State	General	Limited		Non-practising	Provisional	Total	% By State
		Postgraduate training or supervised practice	Teaching or research				
ACT	200	2		1	1	204	1.43%
NSW	3,815	51		31	15	3,912	27.44%
NT	129			1		130	0.91%
QLD	2,975	3	1	5		2,984	20.93%
SA	1,086	10		67	1	1,164	8.17%
TAS	225	6		1		232	1.63%
VIC	3,329	29		36	8	3,402	23.87%
WA	2,135	9		4		2,148	15.07%
Not Stated	72			7		79	0.55%
Total	13,966	110	1	153	25	14,255	

Who does what in occupational therapy regulation in Australia?

The list below outlines the key functions of the main organisations and bodies regulating occupational therapy practice in Australia.

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au

The National Board members were appointed by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 18 July 2011 in preparation for the 1 July 2012 transition to the National Scheme. The Board's functions are defined under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), and it is responsible for:

- registering occupational therapists and students
- developing standards, codes and guidelines for the occupational therapy profession
- handling notifications, complaints, investigations and disciplinary hearings
- assessing overseas-trained practitioners who wish to practise in Australia, and

- approving accreditation standards and accredited courses of study.

Under the National Law occupational therapists must be registered to use the title 'occupational therapist' or to claim to be qualified to practise as an occupational therapist. See the website for further guidance.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

www.ahpra.gov.au

AHPRA was established in March 2009 in preparation for the 1 July 2010 rollout of the National Scheme with the first 10 National Boards. AHPRA:

- manages all registration and notification* matters on behalf of the Occupational Therapy Board and the 13 other National Boards in the National Scheme
- manages the registration renewal process for occupational therapy, and
- is the first point of contact for practitioners who have a query about their registration.

*Except in NSW where this is done jointly by the Health Care Complaints Commission and the Health Professional Councils Authority.

Occupational Therapy Council

<http://otcouncil.com.au>

The Occupational Therapy Council (OTC) as the National Board's appointed accreditation authority is responsible under the National Law for:

- developing accreditation standards and submitting them to the Board for approval
- assessing programs of study and education providers
- assessing overseas authorities
- overseeing the assessment of overseas-trained practitioners, and
- making recommendations and giving advice to the National Board.

Overseas assessment

Internationally qualified occupational therapists wanting to practise in Australia must undertake an initial assessment in compliance with the requirements specified by the Occupational Therapy Council (OTC). This assessment comprises a Stage 1 – desktop audit and a Stage 2 – supervised practice audit.

These initial assessment processes will then qualify overseas-trained practitioners for registration by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia via the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Please visit the OTC website <http://otcouncil.com.au> for further details on the initial assessment processes.

In addition, fact sheets are provided on the National Board's website with further information on:

- demonstrating English language skills for internationally qualified practitioners, and
- grandparenting – 'pathways to practise' transitional arrangements for internationally qualified practitioners.

Updates

Practitioner obligations under the National Law

As a registered occupational therapist, it is important that you are familiar with and understand the national standards and guidelines that apply to your practice. Ensuring that only practitioners who meet these standards are registered is how the National Board protects the public.

All the standards are published under the *Registration standards* tab on the Board's website, and the codes and guidelines are published under the *Codes and guidelines* tab.

Practitioners also have an obligation to renew their registration annually and to disclose certain information to the National Board. The annual registration renewal date for occupational therapists is 30 November (as from 2013).

Under the National Law practitioners must meet nationally consistent registration standards and be adequately qualified to be able to practise. Each National Board has registration standards, including the following five mandatory standards which are common across all the nationally registered professions):

- continuing professional development (see below)
- criminal history
- English language skills
- professional indemnity insurance (see below), and
- recency of practice.

Continuing professional development

What is continuing professional development (CPD)?

The community has the right to expect that health practitioners will provide services in a competent and contemporary way, and meet best practice standards. CPD is an interactive process to maintain and extend practitioners' knowledge, expertise and competence throughout their careers.

CPD is mandatory under the National Law. All registered health practitioners must undertake CPD.

What is the CPD standard?

Occupational therapists must complete a minimum of 30 hours of CPD per year directed towards maintaining and improving competence in occupational therapy practice. This applies to all occupational therapists except students and those with non-practising registration.

Your CPD activities should have clear goals and outcomes, and you should keep a written record of the activities you have completed, plus documented evidence of these activities (a CPD portfolio). These records may be audited by the Board. You will also be required to make a declaration about compliance with the CPD registration standard when you renew your registration each year.

You will have from 1 July 2012 until 30 November 2013 to meet the requirement of 30 hours of CPD (i.e. an initial total of 17 months). From 1 December 2013 all registered occupational therapists will need to comply with the CPD standard every registration year (i.e. every 12 months, each renewal year).

The full CPD registration standard is available under the *Registration standards* tab, along with detailed CPD guidelines and a fact sheet with further information (under *Codes and guidelines*).

Professional indemnity insurance

What is professional indemnity insurance (PII)?

The PII required for registration of health professionals is designed to cover the risks arising from a health practitioner's provision of health care to a person, including direct clinical care and in any other roles that affect the safe, effective delivery of services in the profession. PII insures against civil liability incurred, or loss arising from, a claim made as result of a negligent act, error or omission by a practitioner.

PII covers practitioners for the costs and expenses of defending a legal claim, as well as any damages payable.

Why do I need it?

Under the National Law, a registered health practitioner must not practise their profession unless they have appropriate PII arrangements in place. Unless you hold non-practising registration, you must have this insurance and the onus is on you to ensure your cover is adequate and complies with the Board's PII standard. The standard lays out in detail the PII requirements and gives guidance on what to take into account when planning appropriate cover for your scope of practice.

The Board may, at any time, require you to show that you have PII arrangements in place. You must also sign a declaration of compliance with the PII registration standard when you renew your registration each year.

The full standard is available on the *Registration standards* section of the Board's website.

Renew on time, renew online

In the National Scheme, health professionals are responsible for renewing their registration on time. AHPRA will contact you (by email first) when it is time to renew. If you are not sure when you have to renew, check the record of your registration status on the national register of practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au. The date you must renew by will be the registration expiry date on your record.

Because some occupational therapists transitioned to the National Scheme from state and territory boards with different renewal cycles, it will not be until 30 November 2013 that all in the profession are aligned to the annual registration renewal date. For the coming year, the renewal dates for occupational therapists will be:

Qld	30 June 2013 for 5 months' registration to 30 November 2013
WA	30 June 2013 for 5 months' registration to 30 November 2013
Other states/territories	30 November 2013



Occupational Therapy
Board of
Australia

Accountability and transparency in the National Scheme: hearing decisions published

AHPRA and the National Boards' commitment to transparency and accountability continues with an expansion of the information published about legal issues and hearing decisions. AHPRA has published a table of panel hearing decisions dating back to July 2010. Summaries have been provided where there is educational and clinical value. Practitioners' names are not published, consistent with the requirements of the National Law. Some summaries of tribunal decisions are also provided, to help share information and guide practitioners.

Keeping in touch with the National Board

Make sure you keep your contact details with AHPRA current to receive important updates from the National Board, such as registration renewal reminders.

The National 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. An online enquiry form is available on both websites under the *Contact us* link.

Mail correspondence can be addressed to: Dr Mary Russell, Chair, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

Breakfast forums for registered occupational therapists

The National Board is making it a priority to engage with the profession.

A series of interstate breakfast forums will provide an opportunity to discuss regulation and encourage the integration of registration standards, codes and guidelines into daily practice. Board members will be on hand to present information and to help answer any questions practitioners may have about the National Scheme.

The current schedule of events for 2013 is:

- Tuesday 26 March – Brisbane (Hillstone, St Lucia)
- Monday 27 May – Perth
- Tuesday 23 July – Adelaide

Full event details will be posted on the National Board's website and emailed to registered practitioners closer to event dates.