



## Communiqué

### February 2015

The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The Board meets face-to-face each month to consider and decide on any matters related to its regulatory function within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

This communiqué aims to inform stakeholders of the work of the Board.

### New Board presiding member appointed

The Board noted the resignation of Dr Mary Russell as inaugural chair of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia and the appointment of Ms Julie Brayshaw (practitioner member from Western Australia) as a presiding member until a new chair is appointed by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. This meeting was the last to be chaired by Dr Russell.

Dr Russell is resigning her position as Board chair to take up another role in the National Scheme. Advertisements for the appointment of a new practitioner member from South Australia and the appointment of a new Board chair will be made in due course.

The Board expressed their sincere gratitude to Dr Russell for her tireless work, leadership and support through the first years of the National Scheme for the Board.

### Happy New Year

This meeting was the first of the New Year and the National Board would like to extend best wishes to all stakeholders and partners for 2015. This year is shaping up again to be a busy one for the Board, with a heavy schedule of ongoing work.

### 2015 planning

The Board is putting the finishing touches on its planning for the 2015/16 year. There are several large projects scheduled including a review of the professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development registration standards and a project to develop a new set of competencies for occupational therapists in Australia. The input of stakeholders will be requested for both of these projects and the Board asks that people be aware of and provide feedback when these opportunities arise.

### Grandparenting

The Board notes that grandparenting provisions in the National Law for occupational therapists end on 30 June 2015. Anyone who seeks to obtain registration as an occupational therapist under these provisions should make an application as soon as possible.

Please refer to the Boards [Grandparenting registration standard](#) for more information.

### AHPRA and National Boards strengthen drug screening

AHPRA and National Boards will introduce hair testing for all practitioners with substance-related impairment.

Mandatory hair testing will be routine for all registered health practitioners with substance-related impairment, under a screening protocol to be introduced by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards.

Under the protocol, all health practitioners who have restrictions on their registration linked to past substance abuse will have routine hair testing in addition to urine testing.

Routine hair testing helps provide comprehensive information about the use – over time – of a wide range of drugs (not just based on the practitioner's drug taking history).

National Boards will continue to make decisions about individual practitioners with impairment case by case, based on testing standards set out in the protocol. This includes:

- nationally consistent threshold limits, so all pathology providers conducting the tests use consistent testing baselines (e.g. will report all positive alcohol readings over 30pg/mg in hair)
- agreed 'critical events' – in addition to positive test results - requiring action and follow up (e.g. unexplained delayed screening tests or results, failure to attend screening, diluted or unsuitable samples etc)
- agreed triggers for National Boards to consider disciplinary action (e.g. positive test results, non-compliance with screening requirements etc)

The drug screening protocol is part of a wider, national strategy to effectively manage compliance and monitoring across the National Scheme. The strategy has been progressively implemented from July 2014. More information is in the [media release](#) on the AHPRA website.

### International criminal history checks

AHPRA and the National Boards have now aligned their international criminal history checks with domestic history checks and aims to be fair and reasonable for practitioners. It also provides the Australian community with greater assurance by implementing additional safeguards to manage risks to the public from someone's international criminal history.

#### How does it work?

The new approach requires [certain applicants and practitioners](#) to apply for an ICHC from an AHPRA approved supplier. The supplier will provide the international criminal history check report to the applicant and directly to AHPRA.

Balancing the feedback received during extensive [consultations](#) with the requirements and objectives of the National Law, AHPRA and the National Boards will pilot this approach and evaluate its effectiveness after 12 months, ensuring that it will:

- not impact on registration fees for applicants not requiring an international criminal history check, and
- require evidence from applicants who need an international criminal history check that they have applied for the check when they submit their registration application.

Applicants for registration and registered practitioners will not be granted final registration until the international criminal history report has been considered. The exceptions to the adapted procedure are:

- applications made under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition arrangements, where the National Law is not applicable, and
- applications where a 'workforce imperative' (e.g. would result in an essential health service not being provided) is identified.

These applications will follow an alternate process, in which the international criminal history report will be considered, after registration has been granted. This is anticipated to be a relatively small, low-risk group of practitioners and this solution will address any specific work-force issues.

More information is available in a [media release](#) and in the *Registration* section on the AHPRA website.

### Updating contact details

It is important that you keep your registration details up to date so that you receive important reminders. Your email address will be used by AHPRA to send you important information including renewal notices. To check or update your contact details, go to the online services panel for practitioners on the homepage of the Board's website and click on the relevant link. Enter your user ID, date of birth and password to access your account. Please note that your user ID is not your registration number. If you cannot remember your user ID or password, contact us [online](#) or call: 1300 419 495.

### Conclusion

The National Board publishes a range of information about registration and the National Board's expectations of practitioners on its website at [www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au](http://www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au) or [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

For more detail or with questions about your registration please send an [online enquiry form](#) or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.



Dr Mary Russell  
**Chair**  
**Occupational Therapy Board of Australia**