

Message from the Presiding Member

At its February meeting, the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the National Board) noted the resignation of Dr Mary Russell as Board chair. Dr Russell is resigning her position to take up the role of State Manager for the Victorian AHPRA Office. 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.

Board members congratulated Dr Russell on her new appointment and expressed their sincere gratitude for her tireless work, leadership and support for the Board through the first years of the National Scheme.¹

Until another chair is appointed by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council, the Board has appointed me as the presiding member, to effectively act as chair. Dr Russell leaves big shoes to fill, but I am confident in the collective support, skill and expertise of the Board members to continue the work of the Board.

The Board is establishing a list of practitioners who will be used to provide expert opinions and to act as advisors to AHPRA and the Board on specific issues. These opinions will be requested only on an as-needed basis and practitioners will be remunerated for their work. If you are interested in being involved, I encourage you to read the details in the article in this newsletter.

The Board is starting a number of significant projects in the next few months. We will conduct a review of the profession-specific registration standards for continuing professional development (CPD), recency of practice and professional indemnity insurance (PII). As part of this review we will be seeking input and feedback on matters relating to these standards, so please take the time to provide your feedback as it will be of great assistance to us.

Another Board project is to develop a set of professional competencies for the occupational therapy profession that will be used for both educational and regulatory purposes. This project is expected to take 18 months and we have built in multiple opportunities for input and feedback from stakeholders, so again, please take the time to have your say.

Julie Brayshaw

Presiding Member,
Occupational Therapy Board of
Australia



¹ The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

Call for applications to the Occupational Therapy Board advisory list

The National Board invites applications from experienced practising occupational therapists interested in being included on the Board's list of advisors.

The successful candidates may be approached on an informal basis to assist the Board in activities such as conducting performance assessments of other practitioners, or providing an opinion in a focused area of practice.

The Board is seeking applications from registered occupational therapists predominately in the areas listed below, across all states and territories:

- paediatrics
- driving
- hand therapy
- work health and safety, return to work, functional capacity evaluation
- adult rehabilitation
- mental health, and
- home modifications, equipment prescription and attendant care/home services assessments.

The Board will, however, consider applicants who have experience in areas other than those listed above.

Appointments are for up to three years, with eligibility for reappointment. Your application will be assessed by a selection advisory panel for appointable positions.

For more information on the application process, please download the application form from the [vacancies page](#) on the Board's website, or for general enquiries please contact boardappoint@ahpra.gov.au.

Call for applications for appointment to the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

The Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council are seeking applications for appointment to the following vacancies:

- Occupational Therapy Board of Australia – Chair
- Occupational Therapy Board of Australia – practitioner member from South Australia.

To be eligible for appointment as a practitioner member, you must hold current registration in the profession and be from South Australia.

To be eligible for appointment as Chair you must either be a practitioner member currently appointed to the Board or you may also express interest in being considered for this role when you apply for the practitioner member vacancy on the Board.

National Board appointments are made by the AHWMC, under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). Appointments are for up to three years as decided by the AHWMC.

More information about the roles and the application process is included in the application form and guide. These can be downloaded from our website under [Vacancies](#).

For general enquiries, email boardappoint@ahpra.gov.au or phone (03) 8708 9147.

Applications close 5.00pm AEST on Wednesday 27 May 2015.

Have your say on our registration standards

The National Board is keen to get feedback from practitioners on some of the current registration standards. If you'd like to join a focus group in late May (in Melbourne or online) you can contact the research firm The Big Picture quickly on 03 9527 7978 or info@bigpicture.net.au for more information. And participation counts towards CPD under the category 'engaging with the profession'.

Snapshot of the profession

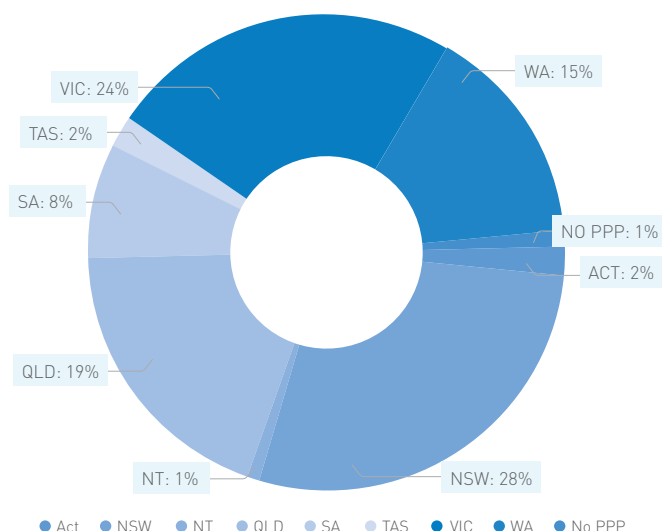
The National Board's latest quarterly data update shows there are 17,024 registered occupational therapists in Australia. See the tables below for more information on the registered workforce, and for further details visit [About us>Statistics](#) on our website.

Occupational therapists – registration type by state or territory (December 2014)

| Occupational Therapy Practitioner | ACT | NSW | NT | QLD | SA | TAS | VIC | WA | No PPP* | Total |
|--|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| General | 264 | 4,634 | 152 | 3,159 | 1,278 | 267 | 4,046 | 2,396 | 131 | 16,327 |
| Provisional | 1 | 14 | | 8 | 2 | | 7 | 5 | | 37 |
| Limited (Total of Subtypes) | 4 | 28 | 1 | 18 | 7 | - | 19 | 18 | 2 | 97 |
| Postgraduate Training or Supervised Practice | 4 | 28 | 1 | 17 | 7 | | 19 | 18 | 1 | 95 |
| Teaching or Research | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Non-Practising | 4 | 113 | 2 | 133 | 76 | 10 | 82 | 103 | 40 | 563 |
| Total Practitioners | 273 | 4,789 | 155 | 3,318 | 1,363 | 277 | 4,154 | 2,522 | 173 | 17,024 |

*Principal place of practice

Occupational therapists – percentage by principal place of practice (December 2014)



End of arrangements allowing some occupational therapists to become registered

From 1 July 2015, the 'grandparenting' arrangements that allowed some occupational therapists to become registered as the profession joined the National Scheme will expire.

Occupational therapists who have not yet applied for registration and do not meet the qualifications requirements of section 53 of the National Law will be affected.

After 1 July 2015, the only way to become registered will be by completing an approved program of study, demonstrating substantial equivalence or doing an exam or assessment as required by the National Board.

For more information, see the [media release](#) on our website and view the [Grandparenting standard](#) on our [Registration standards](#) page.

Board publications, education and events

Board webinars now online – career breaks and recency of practice, CPD and audit

On 23 February 2015, the National Board ran a one-hour webinar, covering:

- registration after more than five years' absence from OT practice
- tips for planning ahead for extended breaks and meeting the *Recency of practice registration standard*
- options such as switching to non-practising registration during a break from practice, and
- supervised practice requirements.

The recording of the webinar is now available for you to watch on our website under the [News](#) tab, and you can also download a transcript or slides.

Participation in this session (or viewing the recording at a later date) can count towards the 'Engagement with the profession' category of your CPD, provided you keep detailed records of your learning.

Webinar on CPD, registration standards and audit

In July 2014, a webinar about CPD, registration standards and audit was held. Watch a [recording of this webinar](#).

Further information

The frequently asked questions have recently been expanded in response to common queries from practitioners. For further guidance on topics including CPD, audit, non-practising registration and recency of practice please visit the [FAQ page](#).

Curtin University needs your help!

Do you currently or have you previously worked with adolescents with high-functioning autism/Asperger's Syndrome?

If so, **we want your help!**

I only have limited experience, you say? **We still want you!**

Researchers at Curtin University (Western Australia) have developed a new and exciting tool called the STEP-A, which guides the transition planning process for adolescents with high-functioning autism/Asperger's Syndrome. We need your help to make the STEP-A as good as possible. You will review the STEP-A, and then fill out a short survey to provide us with feedback. By taking part in this survey you will help us to make it easier for adolescents with autism to plan what they are going to do after school. In the long term, we hope this will lead to more people with autism employed in jobs that suit them and they enjoy.

Interested? Contact Nina Murray:
nina.murray@student.curtin.edu.au

National Scheme news

New approach to international criminal history checks

As of February 2015, National Boards and AHPRA have implemented a new procedure for checking international criminal history to provide greater public protection. This new approach requires [certain applicants and practitioners](#) to apply for an international criminal history check from an AHPRA-approved supplier. This approach aligns our international criminal history checks (ICHC) with our 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.

For more information, please read the [media release](#) on the Board's website.

Boards and AHPRA strengthen national drug screening

Mandatory hair testing will be routine for all registered health practitioners with substance-related impairment, under a screening protocol to be introduced by 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).

The draft protocol can be viewed on AHPRA's [Monitoring and compliance](#) web page.

Call for views on our regulatory principles

National Boards and AHPRA are seeking feedback through an [online survey](#)* on the regulatory principles that were launched in July last year.

The Regulatory principles describe the National Boards and AHPRA's approach to regulation. The principles encourage a responsive, risk-based approach to regulation and support consistent, balanced decision-making. The aim of the principles is to foster a considered approach to regulation, reducing the risk of unnecessary and ineffective regulatory action, and focussing resources on areas where the result is harm minimisation. We are inviting members of the public, health consumers, health practitioners and all interested persons to share their views on our [regulatory principles](#) through this brief survey. The survey has 11 questions and should only take about five to ten minutes to complete.

The responses to these surveys will inform the ongoing implementation of the principles and how they could be further developed and improved.

Complete the survey by 9am Monday 18 May by following the link above, or by pasting this address to your web browser:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LXQTHHL>*

***Privacy:** When you click on this link, you will be taken to a survey on a third party website, hosted by SurveyMonkey. AHPRA is conducting the survey. The survey is anonymous. Responses to the survey will be used to review the *Regulatory principles* for the National Scheme. The information you provide will be handled in accordance with the privacy policies of Survey Monkey accessible [here](#). Information AHPRA obtains from the survey will be handled in accordance with our *Privacy policy* accessible [here](#).

Security alert – keep your web browser updated

AHPRA and the National Boards are making changes to their websites to make sure that your information is kept safe.

From April 2015, anyone using Internet Explorer version 6 (or an older version) to view our websites is likely to experience difficulty accessing our web pages and our online services. To avoid an interruption to service, we recommend you **upgrade to the newest version of Internet Explorer immediately**. It is available for free from Microsoft.

If you are using a new version of Internet Explorer and are still having difficulty accessing our sites please contact us to report your experience: call **1300 419 495** Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 5:00pm (Australian Eastern Standard Time).

If you are using Internet Explorer 6 we recommend you read our latest [security announcement](#) on the AHPRA website.

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 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: Ms Julie Brayshaw, Presiding Member, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne VIC 3001.

An important and easy way to keep up to date with the work of the National Board is to register to receive email updates (you may opt out at any time). Visit the *Receive updates* section at the home page *News* site of our website to register.