

Communiqué

May 2016 meeting of the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

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 functions within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

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

Education provider forum

The Board held a productive and informative session with Victorian education providers of occupational therapy programs. The forum, the first that the Board has held, is reflective of the Board's interest to engage with education providers about work being carried out by the Board that has an impact on the education sector. The Board was also keen to explore with education providers the issues and obligations of education providers in the context of the National Law. The Board will begin work to plan for similar forums in other jurisdictions.

Registration standard review update

Preliminary consultation on the Board's review of the registration standards for continuing professional development, recency of practice and professional indemnity insurance arrangements is anticipated to start in June. The Board encourages participation by stakeholders during both the preliminary and public consultation phases of this review to help inform the direction of revised registration standards for the profession.

Competency standards development project

Significant progress in the development of new competency standards for the profession has been made. The proposed draft standards incorporate a revision to the structure and content of the standards. The Board anticipates that it will begin preliminary consultation in the next month. The Board values feedback from the profession in relation to the draft standards. The Board is keen to ensure that the standards are fit for purpose in all areas of occupational therapy practice and would welcome comment on both the content and structure of the draft standards. The Board looks forward to working with the profession on this important piece of work.

Competency assurance pathways project

The Board approved work to examine the pathways for re-entry into the profession by individuals who have previously been registered as an occupational therapist but been absent from the profession. The initiation of this project was driven by feedback from the profession about the difficulties being experienced with the Board's current supervised practice pathway for re-entry into the profession.

As part of this project, the Board will explore the different models of re-entry used by other comparable professions. It will also seek to engage with the profession and the education sector in the development of alternative pathways. The Board looks forward to providing updates on this project, as work progresses.

Responsible advertising

The Board would like to remind all registered occupational therapists that you must comply with the provisions of the National Law on the advertising of regulated health services, relevant consumer protection legislation, and state and territory fair trading Acts and, if applicable, legislation regulating the advertising of therapeutic goods.

Good practice also involves ensuring that any promotion of therapeutic products is ethical.

All practitioners must be familiar with the *Code of conduct* and *Guidelines for advertising regulated health services* (the guidelines). The guidelines provide any person who advertises a regulated health service or business that provides a regulated health service with guidance on the obligations of advertisers under the National Law.

The National Law bans specific types of advertising, including (but not limited to) advertising in a way that:

- a. makes misleading claims
- b. offers an inducement such as a gift or discount (unless the relevant terms and conditions are also included)
- c. uses testimonials, and/or
- d. creates unreasonable expectations of beneficial treatment, or encourages the indiscriminate or unnecessary use of a service.

The Board would encourage you to check your website against the banned types of advertising to avoid any inadvertent breaches of the National Law.

Family and domestic violence – Queensland and Victoria state reports released

The Board is committed to being part of the solution to major health and social problems as best we can within our mandate as a regulator of occupational therapists.

Everyone should feel safe at home. Tragically, many people across Australia face great danger at home from the people closest to them. Family violence can affect anyone, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or sexuality and it not only impacts on victims, but also their family, friends and the wider society. Health practitioners who often work closely with families could also be in the right place at the right time to help families who fall victim to such violence.

Two significant reports have recently been released on this issue, including one in Queensland and one in Victoria.

The Queensland Government commissioned a special taskforce to conduct an inquiry into domestic and family violence in Queensland. The Taskforce's report '[Not Now Not Ever - putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland](#)' made 140 recommendations to Queensland and national bodies, including three to the National Scheme.

In Victoria, the Royal Commission into Family Violence released its [report and recommendations](#) on how Victoria's response to family violence can be improved. The Commission's 227 recommendations are directed at improving the foundations of the current system, seizing opportunities to transform the way that we respond to family violence, and building the structures that will guide and oversee a long-term reform program that deals with all aspects of family violence. Though there were no specific recommendations directed towards AHPRA or National Boards, several referenced the important role the health system and health professional bodies have to play in influencing child safeguarding and in improving the accreditation and training for health practitioners in this area.

Keeping in touch with the Board

The Board publishes a range of information about registration and its expectations of practitioners on its website at www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au. Practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policy and guidelines affecting their profession.

Julie Brayshaw

Chair

Occupational Therapy Board of Australia

24 May 2016