

Communiqué

20 December 2018

December 2018 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.

Membership of the Board

The Board is pleased to welcome our new community member from Victoria, Ms Jennifer Morris. She will strengthen the community and consumer perspective in the regulatory work of the Board. Ms Morris brings to the role a breadth of experience around regulation which will support the Board in developing and reviewing standards, codes, guidelines and publications.

Ms Morris' biography is published on the [Board's website](#).

Australian occupational therapy competency standards

The Board's Australian occupational therapy competency standards (the competency standards), published in February 2018, will take effect on 1 January 2019.

The competency standards focus on four conceptual areas of occupational therapy practice: professionalism, knowledge and learning, occupational therapy process and practice, and communication. The competency standards specifically acknowledge the need for occupational therapists to enhance their cultural responsiveness and capabilities with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The new standards also include reference to the integration of evidence, reflective practice, digital literacy and the use of appropriate assistive technology.

The Board is continuing its work on the development of supporting tools to help occupational therapists, students, employers, members of the public and others understand and apply the new standards.

Approval of programs of study

The Board agreed to approve the following programs of study accredited by the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd (OTC) and offered by Edith Cowan University in Western Australia:

- Bachelor of Science (Occupational Therapy), and
- Bachelor of Science (Occupational Therapy) Honours.

This decision was based on advice and the accreditation report received from the OTC.

Quarterly registration data

The National Scheme requests that information about every registered health practitioner in Australia is published on a single [national register of practitioners](#).

The Board has published its latest registration data report on the Board's [website](#).

National Scheme updates

Paramedics: Welcome to the National Scheme!

On 1 December 2018 the National Scheme reached a milestone with paramedicine becoming the sixteenth regulated health profession.

Reflecting on the milestone, Paramedicine Board of Australia Chair, Associate Professor Stephen Gough ASM noted that it was the culmination of many years of debate, deliberation and sustained effort by the paramedic profession to join a national regulatory scheme that has patient safety at its heart.

1 December 2018 also marked just over two years since the COAG Health Council announced its intention to regulate the paramedicine profession, with the inaugural National Board appointed in October 2017.

Over this time, stakeholders across the profession, including governments, jurisdictional ambulance services, and private and volunteer organisations, have worked together to make sure that all eligible paramedics are well prepared for regulation.

Since registration opened at the beginning of September 2018, over 17,000 paramedics have applied for registration.

Find out more about paramedicine on the [Paramedicine Board of Australia's website](#).

The online Register of practitioners

Governments recently consulted on possible changes to the National Law^[1], which would allow the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and National Boards to publish on the online [Register of practitioners](#), the names that registered health practitioners use in practice and not just their legal name.

The national online *Register of practitioners* is a vital part of Australia's system of regulating occupational therapists to support patient safety. Each registered health profession publishes registration information about practitioners on the online register. The public and employers can look up the names of all health practitioners who are registered to practise. The register also provides important information about limits or restrictions placed on the way a registered health practitioner is allowed to practise.

The national online register must remain an authoritative and trusted source of information about health practitioners. Consumers rely on it for accurate and up to date information to inform their healthcare decision-making and employers rely on them to validate their employees' registration status.

Some health practitioners use a name that is different from their legally recognised name published on the register (i.e. an alias).

AHPRA has asked governments to consider changes to the National Law that would enable registered health practitioners to nominate one or more aliases to be recorded on the public register. Governments [recently consulted](#) on this, amongst a range of other possible amendments to the National Law.

AHPRA believes that recording additional names (or aliases) on the register will help to inform and protect the public, by making it easier to identify a practitioner who may be registered and able to practise but who is not using their legal name.

There are some operational and practical issues that will need to be considered if governments make this change. A clear definition of an 'alias' is required, so practitioners' reporting obligations to AHPRA and the Board are clear. AHPRA and National Boards will need to consider what information practitioners will need to provide about their use of aliases in practice and whether any verification of this will be necessary to protect the validity of the register. Finally, there may be risks of unintended consequences - including

[1] Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

whether publishing aliases could be used for commercial gain or benefits that are not related to public information and protection, which is the focus of the National Law.

AHPRA and the Board will keep practitioners and the public informed of any changes to the law and reporting requirements.

Are your contact details up-to-date?

It is important that your contact details are up-to-date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the Login icon at the top right of the AHPRA website. Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

Follow AHPRA on social media

Connect with AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) to receive information about important topics for your profession and participate in the discussion.



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

20 December 2018