

## Communiqué

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10 April 2019

### March 2019 meetings 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.

The Board met on 1 March 2019 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and on 26 March 2019 at the AHPRA Office in Melbourne.

#### Engagement with stakeholders

Representatives of the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ), the Occupational Therapy Council of Australia Ltd (OTC) and the Occupational Therapy Council of New South Wales (OTC – NSW) were invited to attend the NRAS Research Summit on 27 February and the NRAS Combined Meeting on 28 February 2019 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

On 1 March 2019, the Board met with representatives of the OTBNZ, OTC and OTC NSW and presented information related to the occupational therapy profession, including data related to the registration of occupational therapist, the demographics of workforce and the notification/complaints data.

On 26 March 2019, the Board was pleased to meet for the first time with Ms Samantha Hunter, Chief Executive Officer of Occupational Therapy Australia at the AHPRA Melbourne Office.

These were great opportunities for the Board and its stakeholders to share information about their current and/or future projects and activities. The Board is keen to continue its engagement with its stakeholders and to share information on its key initiatives on a regular basis.

#### Approval of accreditation standards

The Board considered the final report regarding the review undertaken by the OTC of the *Accreditation standards for Australian entry-level occupational therapy education programs – December 2018* (the accreditation standards – December 2018), together with the final version of the accreditation standards.

The Board approved the accreditation standards – December 2018, with an effect date of 1 January 2020. The Board also agreed that the current accreditation standards (December 2013) will no longer be approved and in effect as of 1 January 2020 and be replaced with the accreditation standards – December 2018..

The accreditation standards – December 2018 will be published on the Board's website shortly.

The Board thanked the OTC for all its work and efforts related to this review.

## Approval of programs of study

The Board agreed to approve the following programs of study accredited by the OTC and offered by Western Sydney University in New South Wales until 31 December 2023:

- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy
- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours)
- Bachelor of Health Science/Master of Occupational Therapy, and
- Bachelor of Health Science (Honours)/Master of Occupational Therapy

The Board agreed to approve the following programs of study accredited by the OTC and offered by Flinders University in South Australia until 31 December 2023:

- Master of Occupational Therapy, and
- Bachelor of Health Science/Master of Occupational Therapy.

## Australian occupational therapy competency standards

The Board's *Australian occupational therapy competency standards* (the competency standards) have been in effect since 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 Board has produced and published a new animated video introducing the competency standards. The video is available at <https://www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Competencies.aspx#newvideo>.

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 competency standards.

## The Board's annual report 2017/18

A profession-specific annual report summary that looks into the work of Board over the year to 30 June 2018 is published at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2018/downloads.html>.

The report draws on data from the 2017/18 annual report by AHPRA and the National Boards. This information provides a snapshot of the profession as at 30 June 2018, and includes the number of applications for registration, outcomes of criminal history checks and segmentation of the registrant base by gender, age and principal place of practice.

Notifications information includes the number of complaints or concerns received, matters opened and closed during the year, types of complaint, monitoring and compliance and matters involving immediate action.

## The Board's newsletter

The Board has published its latest newsletter at <https://www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au/News/Newsletters/February-2019.aspx>.

## National Scheme update

### New resource focuses on titles in health advertising

A new resource to help practitioners understand their legal obligations when using titles in health advertising is now available.

The titles tool has been developed to help registered health practitioners understand how titles can be used in advertising. It also outlines some of the common pitfalls that can result in titles being considered misleading under the National Law<sup>1</sup>.

Misuse of a protected title, specialist title or endorsements is an offence under sections 113-119 of the National Law or may constitute behaviour for which health, conduct or performance action may be taken against a registered health practitioner under Part 8 of the National Law.

However, advertisers should also be aware that while use of some titles may not necessarily breach title protections under sections 113-119, they may be considered false, misleading or deceptive under the advertising provisions in the National Law (section 133).

The [Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy](#) for the National Scheme was launched in April 2017. Under the strategy Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and National Boards have developed several resources to help practitioners and advertisers, including [testimonial](#) and [self-assessment](#) tools, a [summary of advertising obligations](#), [frequently asked questions](#), [tips on words to be wary about](#), and [examples of compliant and non-compliant advertising](#).

The [titles tool](#) is available in the *Advertising resources* section on the AHPRA website.

### **'Let's talk about it' videos launched**

AHPRA has [launched a series of new videos](#) to support the public and registered health practitioners as they go through the notification process.

The video series, called 'Let's talk about it', explains what happens when concerns are raised with the regulator, provides easy to follow information about the notifications process and addresses common questions, so consumers and health practitioners know what to expect when they interact with AHPRA and National Boards.

The videos are:

- [A notification has been made about me](#) features five health practitioners who work within the scheme, directed at health practitioners who have had a notification made about them.
- [I have a concern, am I in the right place?](#) is targeted at members of the public who have a concern but aren't yet sure whether AHPRA is the right place for them to raise it.
- [I have raised a concern with AHPRA](#) provides information for individuals who have just raised a concern with AHPRA.

The videos sit alongside other written resources available on our website, see: [www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications).

Practitioners can view the videos on the AHPRA and National Board websites or from their [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channel and can join the conversation by following AHPRA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#) and use the hashtag #letstalkaboutit and tag @AHPRA.

### **Legislative amendments on mandatory reporting and 'fake' practitioners**

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2019 (Qld) (the Act) has been passed by the Queensland Parliament. The amendments include revisions to the mandatory reporting requirements for treating practitioners and an extension of sanctions for statutory offences.

The changes to the National Law intend to support registered practitioners to seek help for a health issue (including mental health issues). They will also increase the penalties (and the introduction of custodial sentences) for some offences under the National Law, including where a person holds themselves out to be a registered health practitioner when they are not.

AHPRA and the National Boards will now work to implement these amendments. This will require working closely with professional bodies, employers and state and territory health departments to spread the message that practitioners should be supported to seek help about their health issues.

The passing of the Act in Queensland marks the second set of legislative amendments to the National Law since the start of the National Scheme in 2010.

When they take effect, the amendments will apply in all states and territories except Western Australia, where the mandatory reporting requirements will not change.

Practitioners can read a news item about the amendments on the [AHPRA website](#) or the Act on the [Queensland Legislation website](#).

### **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](http://www.occupationaltherapyboard.gov.au) or [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://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

10 April 2019