

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the March edition of *Registrant Update* from the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the National Board). As with previous editions, this update aims to provide you with current information and advice relevant to the practice of physiotherapy in Australia in line with the National Law.¹

I would like to particularly highlight the following issues in this edition:

1. Registrant survey

In the second half of 2014, the National Board is planning to send you an electronic survey to measure your understanding of your obligations under the National Law. This survey aims to assist the National Board in developing guidance about specific areas or obligations that are unclear. I encourage you to participate in this important activity. It will not be a test or have any impact on your ongoing registration as a physiotherapist. Further updates on when you will receive the survey will be mentioned in the Board's communiqué, which is published on the Board's website each month (www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/news).

2. Physiotherapy workforce development

The Forum of National Board Chairs recently met with representatives of the Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council (AHMAC) and the Health Workforce Principal

Committee (HWPC). A key message to Chairs was the need for Boards to ensure fulfillment of all of the objectives of the National Law. This includes enabling the continuous development of a flexible and responsive health practitioner workforce; an objective that is particularly relevant to developing effective contemporary models of healthcare in the current resource-challenged environment.

The above discussion is an important reminder that the National Scheme² places relatively few restrictions on your practice as a physiotherapist in Australia. With the overriding requirement that the public is protected, the Scheme seeks to enable the continuous development of, and innovation in, the practice of physiotherapy.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory

² The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

If you are interested in developing your scope of practice, I strongly encourage you to refer to the National Board's recently updated physiotherapy code of conduct for guidance on the steps the Board expects you to take to ensure your practice remains safe. If you require any further information, please contact the Board via the avenues listed at the end of this *Update*.

Paul Shinkfield

Chair, Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Revised code of conduct, guidelines and new policy

The Board has published four new documents. These are the:

- revised *Code of conduct for registered health practitioners*
- revised *Guidelines for mandatory notifications*
- revised *Guidelines for advertising regulated health services*, and
- a new *Social media policy*.

View the new documents at [Codes and guidelines](#).

The Board encourages you to make sure you are familiar with these documents. They came into effect on 17 March 2014 and are the standards the Board will use to assess concerns about the professional conduct, performance or health of registered physiotherapists. You should also be aware of your legal obligations under the National Law in relation to mandatory reporting and advertising.

The guidelines and the *Social media policy* are common across all the 14 professions regulated in the National Scheme and apply to all registered health practitioners. The shared code of conduct is common to most National Boards and the others have different versions.

The Board reviewed the code of conduct, the advertising guidelines and the mandatory notifications guidelines as part of a scheduled review three years into the National Scheme. This is the first set of revised documents to be released this year, with more to come later in 2014.

The *Social media policy* is new. It does not change the basic obligations that practitioners must meet, but explains how the obligations that already exist in the National Law and the code of conduct apply to social media. The basic principle is that the same expectations apply to your behaviour wherever it occurs – online or in person.



The Board consulted widely in late 2013 about draft versions of these documents. The revised guidelines reflect our experience of the first three years of the National Scheme. The revisions aim to make the guidelines clearer so it is easier for practitioners to understand their obligations, and for members of the community to understand what the Board expects of physiotherapists.

The Board is aware of some ongoing concerns within the profession about the impact of the *Social media policy*. Updated FAQ have been released on the Board's [website](#) that attempt to address these concerns. The FAQ explain the clear difference between advertising – which requires an intent to promote the health services – and unsolicited online comment over which practitioners do not usually have control.

More information about the revised code of conduct, guidelines and the *Social media policy* is also available on the Board's [website](#).

In reference to the code of conduct, a recent decision handed down by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) serves as a reminder of the importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with patients and students – this is available on the Austlii website: [VCAT 1726 \(2 September 2013\)](#).

Stakeholder engagement and projects

Trans-Tasman and international engagement

In May, National Board Chair Paul Shinkfield will represent the Board at a meeting of the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand at the inaugural NZ Health Regulation Conference in Wellington. This will provide an opportunity to further explore issues about the regulation of physiotherapists across our respective systems, including trans-Tasman workforce mobility.

The National Board is a member of the International Network of Physiotherapy Regulating Authorities (INPTRA). This provides an important platform for the discussion and development of regulatory issues for physiotherapists on an international basis, including the global mobility of the profession. The Board is currently contributing to the development of an INPTRA Position Statement on physiotherapy regulation that may be valuable for jurisdictions that are developing their systems of regulation.

Project to develop binational entry-level qualifying statements for the profession

The Physiotherapy Board of Australia and the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand have agreed to work together to establish shared statements that describe the elements of entry-level practice for the physiotherapy profession in the two countries. These statements will replace the

existing Australian Standards for Physiotherapy and the Physiotherapy Competencies for Physiotherapy Practice in New Zealand.

After a competitive tender process, Arete Pty Ltd has been contracted to undertake this significant project and work has begun. An expert reference group, with members from both Australia and New Zealand, has been appointed to support the project.

The respective Boards and the joint Steering Committee for the project are keen to engage with the profession and the broader community and there will be extensive opportunities to provide feedback as the project progresses.

We anticipate that the project will be completed by early 2015.

Australian accreditation requirements review

The National Board is also in preliminary negotiations with the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) for a related project to begin later this year to review the accreditation requirements for Australian programs of physiotherapy study. This will ultimately result in a new Board-approved Accreditation Standard and process for the accreditation of all entry-level programs of study.

New South Wales co-regulatory engagement

The National Board will be sitting in Sydney in late May where it will meet representatives of the NSW Physiotherapy Council and the NSW Health Professions Councils Authority. This is an opportunity to engage with its key partners in the co-regulation system in the state that also has the largest number of registered physiotherapists (see 'Snapshot of the profession' below).

Snapshot of the profession

The National Board has analysed its registration data and produced a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants to share with the profession and the community. The latest quarterly data update was published in December 2013.

The table below shows there are 25,152 registered physiotherapists in Australia. The number of registered practitioners has increased by 449 since the June 2013 update (published in our October newsletter).

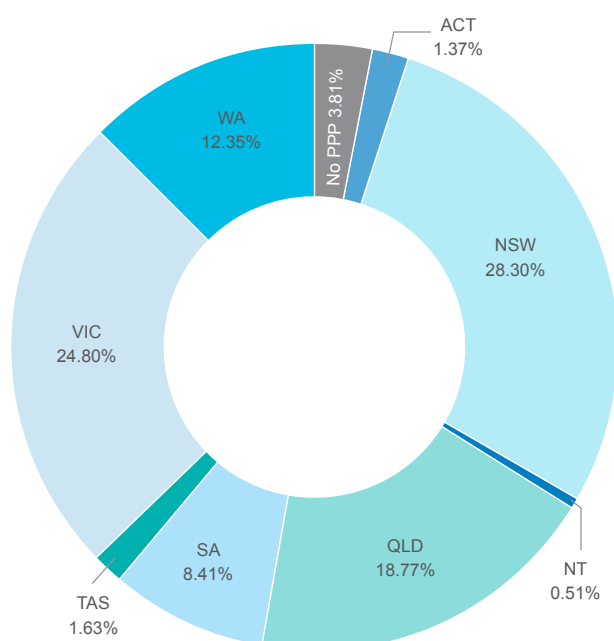
Of this total, 748 are non-practising and 238 have some form of limited registration.

Physiotherapists: state and territory by registration type (December 2013)

Physiotherapy Practitioner	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No PPP	Total
General	472	6,847	163	4,589	2,049	400	5,946	3,025	675	24,166
Limited (Total of Subtypes)	2	47	-	38	41	4	90	14	2	238
Postgraduate Training or Supervised Practice	2	41	-	33	41	4	88	14	2	225
Public Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching or Research	-	6	-	5	-	-	2	-	-	13
Non-Practising	7	225	1	93	25	5	202	68	122	748
Total Practitioners	481	7,119	164	4,720	2,115	409	6,238	3,107	799	25,152

The chart below shows the percentage of practitioners by principal place of practice.

Physiotherapists by principal place of practice (December 2013)



The data published by the National Board also contain information on physiotherapists by gender by state and territory and by endorsement type by state and territory. At present, nine physiotherapists are endorsed for acupuncture, all in Victoria.

For further details, visit the [About>Statistics](#) section of the Board's website.

Update on health practitioner audit

All registered practitioners are required to comply with a range of registration standards that have been developed

by the Board that registers them. These are published on each Board's website under *Registration standards*.

AHPRA and the National Boards have developed a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards. Audits of random samples of health practitioners from all professions will occur periodically throughout the year and began late last year.

Practitioner audits are an important part of the way that National Boards and AHPRA are better protecting the public by regularly checking the declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. Audits help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and enhance the trust of the community in the profession by providing important assurances that practitioners are meeting their professional and legal obligations.

For detailed information on the audit process and what requirements you need to meet if you are audited, visit the new [Audit page](#) on the Board's website.

For more information

- Visit www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Mr Paul Shinkfield, Chair, Physiotherapy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.