

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the November 2013 issue of the Osteopathy Board of Australia's (National Board) newsletter.

There have been a couple of important changes to the National Board recently.

Dr Amanda Heyes (osteopath), inaugural member of the Board, tendered her resignation as a Board member this month. Amanda has given an impressive commitment to regulation, and was appointed to the Board in 2009, having been a member of the Chiropractic and Osteopathy Registration Board of South Australia and the Osteopaths Registration Board of Western Australia before the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) began.

Amanda was also a member of the Australian Osteopathic Council (a predecessor to ANZOC) and was instrumental in transitioning the accreditation council to the National Scheme. Her knowledge of the profession is extensive and has been of great value to the Board. She was also a member of the Board's Registration and Notification Committee. On behalf of the Board I wish her well in all her future endeavours.

There will soon be an advertisement on the Board website for expressions of interest to fill the vacancy on the Board for a practitioner member from WA.

I welcome the recent announcement by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC) that Dr Pamela Dennis (osteopath) from Tasmania has been appointed by Ministers to the Board for a period of three years. The Board is approaching the midway point of the current appointment cycle (until 30 August 2015) and it is timely to acknowledge Board members' contribution to the regulation of osteopathy. As Chair, I have appreciated their professionalism and enthusiasm for the task.

I would like to wish everyone a safe and happy festive and holiday season.

Robert Fendall

Chair, Osteopathy Board of Australia

Vacancies on the National Board and panels – express your interest

There is a National Board vacancy for a practitioner member from Western Australia which will be advertised soon. In 2014, a vacancy for a practitioner member from NSW will also be advertised.

Being appointed to the National Board provides an opportunity for you to contribute to protecting the public by being part of the national regulatory scheme for health practitioners. Osteopathy is a profession with one of the youngest age profiles in the

National Scheme and with an even distribution of gender. Applications for appointment are considered from practitioners with a range of experience, skills and background.

Having a combination of osteopathy experience, enthusiasm, and a strong desire to give back to the community helps us to do the regulatory work as part of the National Scheme. If you don't have previous experience of regulation, there is an induction for new members.

Appointment of National Board members is made by the AHWMC, therefore the Board has no role in making recommendations or decisions on these appointments. However, the Board does like to encourage registered osteopaths to consider applying for appointment when these vacancies arise.

Panel member vacancies

Another way of participating in the regulation of the profession is through involvement in a performance and professional standards panel or a health panel hearing as a practitioner member of the panel. It is an opportunity to become familiar with the legislation that governs osteopathy, decision-making and administration relating to osteopathy notifications made under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Expressions of interest in appointments to the list of approved persons for panels will be advertised by the Board early in 2014. These appointments are made by the Board. From time to time, boards may also require participants for committees to work on a specific area of advice or assistance.

Vacancies (for Board and panel members) are advertised on the National Board recruitment website at AHPRA: www.ahpra.gov.au/Health-Professions/Board-member-recruitment.aspx.

Hurry – renew by 30 November 2013

Osteopaths across Australia are reminded that their registration is due for renewal **by 30 November 2013**. Letters have been sent to practitioners who have not supplied an email address.

Make sure you renew your registration on time. The quickest and easiest way to do this is [online](#). Osteopaths who do not want to renew their registration to keep practising can simply ignore the reminders from AHPRA or go online to 'opt out' of renewing. Using the 'opt out' service puts a stop to renewal reminders. FAQ about renewal is on the [Board website](#).

Renewal applications received by AHPRA after 30 November will incur an additional late fee. If you haven't renewed by one month after 30 November 2013, your registration will lapse. This means you must make a new application for registration and will **not be able to practise** until your application has been finalised.

New pathway for overseas-trained practitioners – competent authority pathway

Overseas-trained osteopaths will be able to apply for registration to work in Australia via a new pathway in early 2014. The new **competent authority pathway** will sit alongside the existing current **standard pathway** for overseas-trained practitioners.

It will allow some practitioners who qualified in the United Kingdom after 2000 to be considered as having the clinical skills and knowledge to practise in Australia. Overseas-trained osteopaths who apply for registration through the competent authority pathway will be required to sit an assessment on the practice of osteopathy in Australia. This assessment will be run by the Australian and New Zealand Osteopathic Council (ANZOC) and will be based on *Information on the practice of osteopathy in Australia: a guide for graduates trained overseas*, which is published on ANZOC's [website](#).

Once they have satisfactorily passed the ANZOC assessment, osteopaths applying via the new pathway will also be required to be supervised for six months in Australia before being eligible for general registration. Supervision will be carried out by two Australian osteopaths. When the applicant osteopaths have successfully met the supervision and provisional registration requirements, the Board will consider their application for general registration.

In developing the new pathway, the Board undertook extensive consultation from late 2012 to August 2013, including two rounds of public consultation. The Board also sought advice from its accreditation body, ANZOC, and will be working closely with ANZOC to finalise the details of the new pathway.

Further information will be released shortly, including application forms and fees.

Advertising – be alert to your messages

Complaints about advertising of regulated health services have increased across the National Scheme. In general, complaints to National Boards about advertising come from registered health practitioners and organisations.

The Osteopathy Board will shortly be releasing a revised *Code of conduct* and *Guidelines for advertising* for the profession and a *Social media policy*. These have been consulted on in conjunction with the other National Boards. Previous newsletters have highlighted advertising issues, such as the legal obligation to not use testimonials, discounts or time-limited offers (Issues 1 and 2) and not using the term 'specialist' (Issue 6).

While the revised *Guidelines for advertising* will provide updated guidance to the profession in response to public and operational feedback, the message to the profession remains clear: under section 133 of the National Law¹, an

osteopath must not advertise a health service in a way that is false, misleading or deceptive or creates an unreasonable expectation of beneficial treatment.

Until the revised guidelines come in to effect, the current *Guidelines for advertising* published on the Board's [website](#) provide guidance about interpretation of the advertising provisions of the National Law. These guidelines may be used as evidence in any proceedings against a health practitioner.

The Board expects all osteopaths to check their websites and leaflets to ensure that they comply with the National Law and advertising guidelines, and in particular not to make claims for effective treatment where this cannot be verified by good quality evidence; or advertise or perform services that are not within their training or competency to perform.

Low health literacy and the potential to mislead

The Board recommends that osteopaths exercise caution when providing scientific information because of the limited understanding of that information by members of the public. If such information is used, it should be clear and easy to understand. It should also identify relevant researchers or academic sources and the publication must be from a verifiable and reputable source.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care in *Consumers, the health system and health literacy: taking action to improve safety and quality* noted that there are studies which have shown that 'approximately 60 per cent of Australians have poor health literacy and are not able to effectively exercise their "choice" or "voice" when it come to making health care decisions'. Low levels of health literacy should be taken into account when providing information, as should the potential to mislead.

Legal advice on advertising content

If you are not sure whether or not your advertising content may be an offence under the National Law or not comply with the Board's guidelines, you might consider obtaining your own legal advice before using the material. Consulting with colleagues or professional associations may also be helpful but should not be relied upon in place of legal advice. The Board or AHPRA are unable to provide advice or approval of advertising content other than by providing guidelines, [FAQ and fact sheets](#).

The Board will bring out guidelines and fact sheets from time to time, and you should check the Board's website regularly to keep informed of developments and your advertising obligations.

Regulator logos – not to be used on osteopathy websites

Since the implementation of the National Scheme, some health practitioners have sought permission to reproduce AHPRA's logo or their profession's National Board logo on their business website.

AHPRA and the National Boards have a strict logo use policy and rarely grant permission for their logos to be used by third parties.

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

The roles of AHPRA and the National Boards in the National Scheme make it inappropriate for either party to endorse, or be perceived to be endorsing, individuals and organisations; their products or services.

Practitioners who have reproduced the AHPRA or a National Board logo on their business website should remove it and consider publishing a text link to www.ahpra.gov.au, advising that their registration to practise can be confirmed by checking the national register of practitioners.

Audits targeting osteopaths

Osteopaths are now being audited on a random selection basis.

Each time an osteopath applies to renew their registration they must make a declaration that they have met the registration standards for their profession. Practitioner audits are an important part of the way that National Boards and AHPRA can better protect the public by regularly checking these declarations made by a random sample of practitioners. They help to make sure that practitioners are meeting the standards they are required to meet and provide important assurance to the community and the Boards. Make sure all your declarations are correct and you undertake the required continuing professional development each year.

Auditing of all professions has begun. If you are selected for audit you will be notified in writing. You may be requested to provide evidence that you meet the requirements of the standards.

Further information is available on the [Board's website](#).

Attention students – graduate applications for general registration available online

Students who are in their final year of an [approved program of study](#) can apply for registration online now.

Students of osteopathy who will be completing studies at the end of 2013 are able to apply for registration early before completing their course. Applications can also be made by completing a [paper application form](#). All applications, online or in hard copy, require students to post some supporting documents to AHPRA to complete the application. Students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#).

Graduates must meet the Board's [registration standards](#) and need to be a registered osteopath before they can start practising. New graduates are registered and eligible to start work as soon as their name is published on the [national register of practitioners](#).

Professions Reference Group update

The Professions Reference Group was set up in 2012. It is made up of representatives of the professional associations for the professions included in the National Scheme, including osteopathy, with participation from AHPRA's CEO and senior staff. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for AHPRA to brief the professions about its work and for the professions to ask questions about emerging issues relevant to regulation. The group also provides expert advice to AHPRA in developing a range of information for practitioners, such as the recently published [notifications guide and fact sheets](#).

By working with the group, AHPRA has also been able to establish a practitioner consultative group, made up of individual practitioners nominated by their professional association who are willing to provide feedback on proposals and systems improvements, to inform change and improve services ahead of large-scale implementation.

For more information

- Visit www.osteopathyboard.gov.au for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ. Visiting the website regularly is the best way to stay in touch with news and updates from the Board.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on every web page under *Contact us*.
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- To update your contact details for important registration renewal emails and other Board updates, go to the AHPRA website: [Update contact details](#).
- Address mail correspondence to: Robert Fendall, Chair, Osteopathy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.