



NEW SOUTH WALES

28 JUN 2005
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OSTEOPATHS REGISTRATION BOARD

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28 June 2005

Submission No. 27
Date Received 28/6/05

Ms Paola Cerrato-D'Amico
The Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Cerrato-D'Amico

The Osteopaths Registration Board is the independent statutory body created by the Osteopaths Act 2001 to maintain the Register of osteopaths of New South Wales and administer the Act generally.

At its meeting of 7 June 2005, the Board considered your letter, dated 25 May 2005, regarding the inquiry into skills recognition, upgrading and licensing. The Board has directed me to provide a response to the Terms of Reference as follows:

Osteopaths have been registered in New South Wales since 1979. From 1979 to 1991 registration was under the Chiropractic Act 1978, from 1991 to September 2002 registration was under the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act 1991, and from August 2002 registration was under the Osteopaths Act 2001. As at 30 June 2004 there were 488 registered osteopaths in New South Wales.

Osteopaths and chiropractors are registered under separate legislation in each jurisdiction of Australia, except Australian Capital Territory, Northern Territory, South Australia and Tasmania where osteopaths and chiropractors are registered under the same legislation. "Osteopathy", or the "practice of osteopathy", is not generally defined. Only persons registered as osteopaths may use the title "osteopath". In some jurisdictions, for example NSW, only persons registered as osteopaths and/or chiropractors [and physiotherapists and medical practitioners] may manipulate the bones of the human spinal column or its immediate articulations. In South Australia "osteopathy" is part of the definition of chiropractic but the Register is divided into separate categories for osteopaths and chiropractors. In other jurisdictions of Australia the Registers are divided into "chiropractors" and "osteopaths" and practitioners may be registered as both.

The statutory registration Boards that have an interest in registration of osteopaths therefore number 9, as follows.

BOARD
ACT Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board
NSW Osteopaths Registration Board
NT Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board
Osteopathic Council of New Zealand
Qld Osteopaths Registration Board
SA Chiropractic Registration Board
Tasmania Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board
Victoria Osteopaths Registration Board
WA Osteopaths Registration Board



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Generally speaking, there are three avenues for obtaining registration as follows:

- Recognised/prescribed qualifications

Each local Act or Board maintains a list of qualifications prescribed or recognised for registration as an osteopath. Historically this has been as a consequence of accreditation of courses. The osteopathic courses conducted by RMIT and Victoria University have been accredited and their graduates are entitled to be registered, subject to good character, in each Australian jurisdiction. The osteopathic course conducted by the UWS has been accredited in NSW and Tasmania, and the osteopathic course conducted at the UNITEC has been accredited in New Zealand and Australian registration Boards are considering their position with respect to recognition of the course for registration purposes.

Overseas courses in osteopathy are no longer recognised by any jurisdictions.

- Mutual recognition

Osteopaths registered in one jurisdiction of Australia, or New Zealand, are entitled to be registered in the other jurisdictions subject to any conditions applying to their registration on the original jurisdiction. These arrangements are made possible by mutual recognition legislation passed in each jurisdiction of Australia and New Zealand. The Board registers osteopaths in accordance with the Osteopaths Act 2001, the Mutual Recognition Act 1992 and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997.

- Examination

Some jurisdictions provide for an examination for registration as an osteopath. All jurisdictions, through ACORB, are in the process of developing one national examination process for applicants with qualifications that have not been accredited or prescribed. In general the examination process provide that applicants be individually assessed, taking into account all relevant qualifications and experience, and the regulatory framework, education and accreditation standards, and qualifying examinations of the applicant's country of origin would be taken into account, and experience in practice would be given due weight.

Ms Louise Adam, Board Member and Chairperson of the Australian (and recently New Zealand) Conference of Osteopathic Registration Boards (ACORB) Examination Taskforce Committee provided these additional comments for the submission:

Osteopathy is suffering acute shortage of skilled workers. This shortage is especially severe in outer metropolitan areas and all regional areas.

A significant proportion of osteopaths practicing in Australia are from overseas. Most were trained in the United Kingdom

The capacity of existing osteopathic pre-professional training programs in Australia and New Zealand is inadequate to meet this shortage. Indeed, the only pre-professional program for entry to the osteopathic profession available in NSW recently suspended intake as part of a whole of university review



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The practice model in the UK is fairly similar to that in Australia and so their graduates and registrants are a potential source of appropriately skilled osteopath that might be acceptable for registration within Australian jurisdictions following assessment.

Assessment is currently conducted by some states in Australia and in New Zealand. The Australian Conference of Osteopaths Registration Boards (ACORB) has established a taskforce to advise on the development of a national examination process for assessment of overseas and local osteopaths. The Taskforce and ACORB include representation from New Zealand.

The Taskforce recommend that Osteopathy continues to be recognised as a profession with acute skills shortage in Australia and that processes be developed to facilitate the articulation of skills assessment and skilled migration assessment by DIMIA. These processes should include discussions between representatives of ACORB and DIMIA.

It should be noted the Board does not deal with matters relating to immigration and refers inquiries to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Yet, it has been voiced by Boards throughout Australia, through ACORB, the process for osteopaths immigrating to Australia is generally difficult for osteopaths. This difficulty could also be attributed to the absence of an immigration agent for osteopaths in Australia. The matter of immigration will be discussed at greater length at the next meeting of ACORB in September this year.

Thank you for providing the Board with the opportunity to present a submission. The Board looks forward to receiving ongoing information regarding this matter in the future.

Yours faithfully

Jennifer Caldwell
ACTING REGISTRAR