

New VET arrangements for training product development

As you are probably aware, earlier this year Skills IQ was confirmed as the Skills Service Organisation for Complementary and Alternative Health. To date, most of the efforts of the new overarching body, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), and the various Skills Service Organisations (SSOs) have been directed towards establishing a governance and operating framework.

The newly convened Industry Reference Committee for Complementary and Alternative Health met for the first time on 11 April at the Skills IQ office in Sydney. Skills IQ CEO, Yasmin King, and General Manager, Melinda Brown, were present at the meeting. Yasmin King gave an overview of developments in the new system, most of which were governance related.

The Industry Reference Committee signed off on a one-year work plan that encompasses the following immediate priorities:

- Review IRC membership ensuring broad representation at strategic level to provide recommendations to the AISC
- Identify and build broad database of stakeholders and industry key players to be used for consultation purposes and industry intelligence gathering
- Validate stakeholder feedback on implementation outcomes of recently endorsed training packages.

There was some discussion around assessing the implementation outcomes associated with the requirements for supervised clinical practice.

SkillsIQ is maintaining an issues register to track feedback and issues regarding the implementation of training products. All comments, regardless of their nature, are recorded. This is inclusive of minor grammatical errors through to significant implementation issues and industry concerns. Comments and feedback can be directed to enquiries@skillsiq.com.au

BUPA provider requirements

AMT was in negotiation with BUPA in April regarding its new criteria for remedial massage therapy providers. The fund was proposing to increase the minimum professional indemnity insurance limit to \$5,000,000 for remedial massage providers. AMT made a submission to BUPA that resulted in the fund revising the limit down to \$2,000,000.

All new prospective BUPA providers must take out at least \$2,000,000 professional indemnity insurance cover.

AMT 50th anniversary conference

AMT's annual conference and 50th anniversary celebrations will be held in Sydney on September 23 and 24. We're pleased as punch to be hosting one of the stars of the Australian pain scene, Tasha Stanton, as our keynote speaker. We will also be debating the somewhat topical and contentious issue of professional title with comedian Peter Berner moderating.

For full program details, you can download the conference brochure here:

<http://www.amt.org.au/downloads/conference/AMT-Conference-Brochure-2016.pdf>

As usual, there is a reduced registration fee for students:

<http://www.amt.org.au/downloads/conference/AMT-Conference-Rego-Form-2016.pdf>

Statement regarding 'AAMT Certification'

On May 28, the Australian Association of Massage Therapists (AAMT) announced its intention to establish a scheme it refers to as 'AAMT Certification'.

It is difficult to ascertain from the information that AAMT has made publicly available how the proposed certification scheme would operate. However, AMT is deeply concerned by the claims that AAMT has made to support the establishment of the scheme and sceptical about the motherhood statements relating to its intended impact and effect.

On its website, AAMT has stated that:

Most other Massage associations do not have the staff, skills or resources to undertake this program. By taking a leadership role AAMT can help all associations achieve the goal of consistent quality assurance.

AMT has not vetted or approved this certification scheme. We strongly object to the misleading assertion that this work has been conceived and undertaken on our behalf.

AAMT also states:

AAMT has approached a number of key stakeholders to recognise and adopt the Certification scheme.

To date, AAMT has not consulted with AMT on any aspect of the scheme. AMT first became aware of the proposal on May 28.

In its description, AAMT uses a range of terms to describe its concept of certification, including best practice, quality assurance, accreditation, trademarked specialties, trademarked titles of practice, accredited specialist and qualifications. The details provided are unclear and confusing. It is impossible to determine whether these terms are being used interchangeably. However, AMT is deeply troubled by the possibility that this proposal is an attempt by AAMT to control qualifications and training that has been developed in the public interest through the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Although it is not clear from the information that AAMT has made available, it would seem that AAMT is proposing to trademark 15 professional "accredited" modalities or "titles of practice" under the scheme, including 'Remedial Massage Therapist'. Other proposed titles include "Chinese Therapist" and "Thai Therapist". We assume the latter titles refer to skills sets and are not racial designations. However, the proposed terminology is insupportable for self-evident reasons.

Manifestly, it will not be possible to trademark terms such as Remedial Massage Therapist, which are in common general usage. AMT will monitor any attempts to do so regardless.

AAMT has stated that certification will:

- assist other Massage and Myotherapy Associations with resources to achieve a higher standard of quality assurance for their members, despite limited resources

educator news

- create a nationally-recognised high quality assurance program that all associations, Therapists and consumers can understand and access
- facilitate greater levels of collaboration on industry-wide issues
- create a universal and independent standard for the sector.

The massage therapy sector already has a 'universal and independent' certification standard that all associations, therapists and consumers can understand and access. It is called the Australian Qualifications Framework and includes the suite of qualifications that have been developed as part of our shared national competency standards. These qualifications are issued in a transparent regulatory system. Competency standards are developed and reviewed communally by industry stakeholders within a third-party governance framework that has inbuilt mechanisms to address conflicts of interest.

AAMT states that:

Certification capitalises on the new improved training requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and new legislation introduced by the Federal Government during 2015, which regulates qualifications in Australia.

and:

Around 85 per cent of AAMT members already have the qualifications and quality assurance to become Accredited specialists. Therapists from all Associations will be able to apply and complete the process of Accreditation.

AMT will stringently oppose any certification scheme that involves needless duplication of standards articulated through the Australian Qualifications Framework. Further, AMT will oppose any scheme that creates extra costs for therapists through pointless duplication of existing qualification and governance structures.

AMT will also oppose any attempt to take ownership of intellectual property associated with qualifications established within the Australian Qualifications Framework.

AMT would also oppose any certification scheme that unfairly benefits or gives undue legitimacy to providers of privately owned qualifications and training.

AAMT states:

Certification in itself does not require you to change what you are doing. If you are not Accredited you will not be able to use the recognised Titles of Practice that are trademarked under the scheme.

AAMT has not specified costs in connection with "accreditation".

AMT will not support a system that requires therapists to recertify (for want of a better term) their nationally recognised qualifications in remedial massage, myotherapy, soft tissue therapy, TCM massage therapy and shiatsu therapy. Therapists should not be forced to "accredit" just to avoid being pursued for trademark infringement.

At this stage, it is unclear how certification would impact therapists who are currently being grandfathered.

The certification scheme does not appear to encompass therapists who hold Certificate IV qualifications. It is unclear what the ramifications of this might be for massage therapists who hold qualifications at this level.

Please be reassured that AMT will seek to disrupt and dismantle any scheme that operates to the detriment and disadvantage of our members and the sector at large.

AMT is actively monitoring AAMT's proposal.

On Monday 6 June, AAMT CEO, Tricia Hughes, and President, Paul McCann, sent a letter via email to the AMT Board formally inviting AMT to a "confidential discussion around formalising a transparent arrangement of quality assurance with AMT as providers and partners in the new system."