New Zealand Occupational Therapy Board

7 March 2003

TTMR Review
Productivity Commission
PO Box 80
Belconnen ACT 2616
AUSTRALIA

Dear Reviewers

Review of Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition

Thank you for the opportunity given to the New Zealand Occupational Therapy Board to comment on the operation of the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (TTMR) arrangement.

The comments of the New Zealand Occupational Therapy Board are as follows:

- Only four of the eight Australian States or Territories register occupational therapists. It would be valuable if this arrangement were in place with all Australian States. The Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards of Australia and New Zealand wrote to Prime Minister Howard on 1 August 2001 to encourage this.

- The TTMR scheme appears to be working fine for this Board with the three Australian State Occupational Therapy Boards who have similar TTMR legislation. To date this Board has registered 19 Australian registered occupational therapists under the TTMR Act. We understand that although Western Australia does register occupational therapists, that State has not yet passed the required TTMR legislation to be part of the arrangement.

- While the registration of occupational therapists in New Zealand is separate to the immigration process, in Australia the two are linked. This means that if a NZ registered therapist seeks a new Australian immigration status as well as the right to practise occupational therapy, then additional barriers are imposed before being able to practise unconditionally in Australia. In addition NZ registered occupational therapists are being treated differently depending on whether they are trained in New Zealand or not.

- One apparent error in the drafting of the TTMR Act should be rectified. Although the definition of "working day" in section 2 specifically excludes the weeks around the Christmas break, this does not appear to apply (but should) to the one month permitted to Boards under section 20 to action a valid TTMR notice.

- It seems anomalous and inequitable that the Trans-Tasman arrangement does not apply to all health professions. This Board suggests that the exemption afforded medical practitioners should be removed.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cumming
Registrar
New Zealand Occupational Therapy Board