

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS INC.



14 July 2008

Mutual Recognition Review
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collilns Street East
Melbourne VIC 8003
AUSTRALIA

Submission to Review of the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement

This submission is made on behalf of the New Zealand Society of Physiotherapists Inc. (NZSP) the recognised professional organisation representing physiotherapists in New Zealand. Membership is voluntary and currently totals more than 2,750 members being around 78% of all annual practising certificate holders. Members work in private practice, district health boards (including public hospitals), private hospitals and rest homes, special education services, teaching and research.

In making this submission, NZSP is confining its remarks to Section 5: Occupations of the Productivity Commission Issues Paper.

The Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA) has had a positive effect in making registration of physiotherapists between Australia and New Zealand a very straightforward and timely process. It has also had the effect of strengthening working relationships between physiotherapy organisations in Australia and New Zealand to ensure that we have good communication on educational and career pathway developments in each country.

There has, however, been one negative outcome from TTMRA in New Zealand. The registration process for physiotherapists coming to New Zealand from countries other than Australia is a rigorous process but does not include the lengthy and expensive process to undertake the written and practical examinations required for the same physiotherapists to gain registration in Australia. Applying for registration in New Zealand can therefore be seen as an easier option as once the applicant has New Zealand registration and an annual practising certificate, they can then immediately apply for and gain registration in Australia under TTMRA. This 'back-door' route via New Zealand to work in Australia is well known in other countries such as the United Kingdom and is possibly being encouraged by recruitment agencies.

There is a current shortage of physiotherapists in New Zealand with many of our members having vacancies for many months before being able to make an appointment. The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand advises NZSP that a number of the registrations they process each year from physiotherapists applying from other countries, result in successful applicants moving on to Australia without ever working in New Zealand.

NZSP would very much prefer that the time currently spent by the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand in processing and evaluating such applications resulted in additional physiotherapists working in New Zealand, even if for a limited period of time, rather than moving directly to Australia to work.

NZSP strongly recommends that a residency requirement of at least six months but preferably one year post-registration in New Zealand or Australia be required as a pre-requisite for obtaining registration in New Zealand or Australia under TTMRA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gail Leach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gail Leach
Executive Director