

PHYSIOTHERAPY BOARD OF NEW ZEALAND SUBMISSION

Review of the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA)

The Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand is the statutory regulatory authority for physiotherapy authorised under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. The primary function of the Board is to protect the health and safety of the New Zealand public by providing for mechanisms to ensure physiotherapists are competent and fit to practise.

The Physiotherapy Board is making this further submission following:

- Receipt of the Productivity Commission Draft Research Report and specifically issues detailed in Section 5 Registration of Occupations
- Discussions at the Productivity Commission's Roundtable held in Wellington on Wednesday 26 November.

In its previous submission the Board stated the belief that the inclusion of residency requirements on the granting of registration in the home jurisdiction would markedly reduce the incidence of jurisdiction shopping and hopping. However the draft report as released does not support the inclusion of any residency requirement.

This submission aims to provide further background information on the rationale for the Board reiterating the request for residency requirements.

New Zealand has a shortage of physiotherapists. This Board is increasingly under pressure to provide more physiotherapists for the New Zealand workforce. Major employers such as District Health Boards state that the lack of physiotherapy services is impacting on the health and safety of the public thus causing harm to the public.

The reality is that the Board is processing increasing numbers of applications and registering more physiotherapists each year. The major increase seen is in those overseas educated physiotherapists who gained their qualification in the United Kingdom and Eire.

**Table 1:
Overseas Physiotherapists Registered by the Physiotherapy Board of
New Zealand 2005 - 2008**

Year Registered	Number
2005	140*
2006	154
2007	189
2008	221
Total	704

The number of overseas educated physiotherapists gaining registration in New Zealand in New Zealand has continued to increase.

* this number includes physiotherapists registered under the Physiotherapy Act 1949 (45) and those registered under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (95).

**Table 2:
Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) Assessment for Registration
Purposes - total number of candidates completing examination
process 2005 - 2008**

Year Completed Exams	Number
2005	59
2006	48
2007	81
2008	101
Total	289

Figures included with the permission of APC. Please make direct contact with APC for further information.

Tables 1 and 2 highlight the disparity in the numbers of overseas educated physiotherapists completing the registration process in the two countries given that Commonwealth of Australia has a population of 21 million and New Zealand only 4 million.

The application for registration fee for overseas educated applicants seeking registration in New Zealand is much cheaper than the fees in Australia imposed on overseas applicants completing the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) examination route (on successful completion and when issued their APC Final Certificate, the individual is entitled to approach a state/territory physiotherapy registration board to apply for full registration).

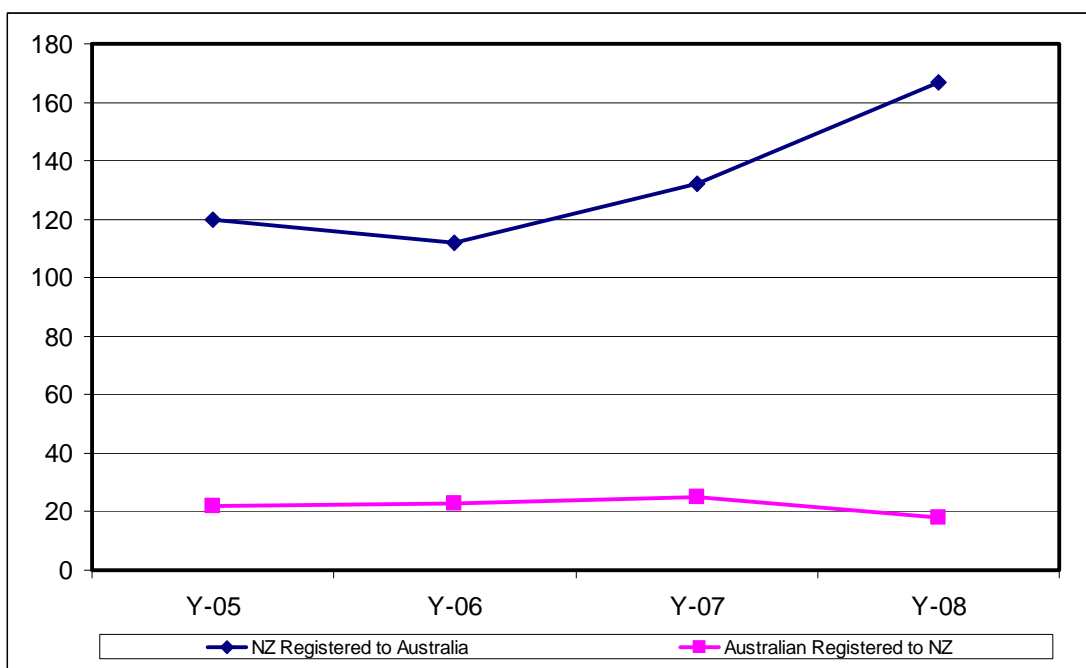
Different methods of assessment for overseas educated applicants are utilised by the Australian and New Zealand authorities however the assessment processes are acknowledged as being equally as rigorous in determining competence and suitability

for registration. Applicants view the New Zealand paper based process as an easier option (done in their own time whilst still practising in their home country) than the Australian route which involves applicants travelling to Australia to undertake mandatory examinations.

Physiotherapists employed in Australia enjoy higher wages than their New Zealand counterparts. Australian employers actively/aggressively recruit New Zealand registered physiotherapists.

This Board is essentially functioning as an agency providing a physiotherapy workforce for Australia; somewhat at odds with its legislated primary function to benefit the public of New Zealand.

Graph 1: Registration of Physiotherapists under TTMRA 2005-2008



This graph clearly illustrates that there is significant and growing disparity between the number of Australian registered physiotherapists utilising TTMRA to practise in New Zealand and the number of New Zealand registered physiotherapists crossing the Tasman to practise in Australia.

The number of New Zealand registered physiotherapists going to Australia is trending upwards while the number of Australians coming to New Zealand appears to be decreasing. The gap between those leaving for Australia and those arriving from Australia is widening. For example, in 2005 New Zealand “lost” 98 physiotherapists however by 2008 this number had increased one and half times to 149.

In 2008 in the year to date, the Board registered 221 overseas educated physiotherapists; however 11% of these physiotherapists have now supplied an address in Australia. The percentage will increase over time as the registrants move directly from the United Kingdom to Australia.

Suggestions have been made by several Australian authorities that this Board redress the shopping and hopping imbalance by simply raising the application for registration fee for overseas applicants i.e. to match fees imposed on overseas applicants completing the Australian Physiotherapy Council examination route. This is not feasible. The Board is not a commercial enterprise. Any proposed fee increase will be based on the basis of cost recovery. As a regulatory authority the Board fee structure is subject to the scrutiny, and ultimate approval of, the New Zealand Parliament Regulatory Review Committee.

The Board believes TTMRA is a good scheme when used under the original intent, however when it is abused by third parties it affects the health of the New Zealand public.