



AUSTRALIAN  
PHYSIOTHERAPY  
ASSOCIATION



# APA ADVOCACY NEWS

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## Developing news

### Aged Care Royal Commission recognises physiotherapy in falls prevention

In another win for physiotherapy, the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has recognised the critical role of physiotherapists in supporting people to age well.

The final report identified the importance of promoting and maintaining mobility to reduce the risk of life-threatening falls in older people.

Access to physiotherapy was critical in mobility and falls prevention, the Royal Commission identified in its report.

Ensuring appropriate allied health care for residential aged care residents was also among the Final Report's 148 recommendations to completely overhaul the aged care system.

The fresh high-profile Royal Commission acknowledgement follows many years of strong advocacy by the APA and its dedicated Gerontology National Group.

Last year alone, this work included:

- a total of six submissions to the Royal Commission,
- contributing to joint work with AHPA, the draft Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Roadmap, and a number of key aged care working groups including on mental health with the Australian Psychological Society,
- a submission to the Draft Restraint Principles Review,

- twice meeting with the then Minister for Aged Care Richard Colbeck,
- six submissions to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and
- successfully lobbying to secure APA a seat in the Royal Commission virtual "witness box".

National Vice President Rik Dawson presented expert evidence on falls prevention programs for both physical and mental wellbeing to the Royal Commission.

This work directly led to the findings of the Royal Commission's investigation into the Impacts of COVID-19 on Aged Care that recommended:

- funding of a landmark six-month group mobility program, developed by physiotherapist Dr Jennifer Hewitt, to combat the impacts of lockdown on aged care residents in affected facilities, and
- doubling of the number of allied health sessions available under Chronic Disease Management Plans (CDMs), from five to 10 consultations, to better address the complexities of treating older people in residential aged care facilities.

The Federal Government responded to the report by announcing immediate additional funding of \$452.2 million to address immediate priorities in the sector.

It announced five broad pillars it would address more comprehensively at a later date. The pillars are:

- home care,
- residential aged care quality and safety,
- residential aged care services and sustainability,
- workforce, and
- governance.

The APA understands that the Government is likely to adapt the AN-ACC model of funding in residential aged care and attempt to streamline home care support systems. We will continue to advocate for:

- an additional layer of restorative and reablement funding to complement the AN-ACC, and
- the number of physiotherapy sessions available to older people under CDMs to be permanently doubled.

Rik Dawson will be examining the aged care landscape, the Royal Commission and the next 12 months in the sector in our upcoming April *ETalk*.



## Latest advocacy and emerging issues

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

Thursday 18 March is National Close the Gap Day. We encourage members to save the date for the launch of the Campaign's report, Leadership & Legacy through Crisis: Keeping Our Mob, via public webinar from 12–1.15pm.

Further details:  
[Lowana.williams@australian.physio](mailto:Lowana.williams@australian.physio)

### Aged care

The APA has publicly responded to the Royal Commission's final report and will seek to meet with a number of key stakeholders and continue to advocate permanent and significant funding reform in the sector.

Further details: [APA media release](#)

### Animal physiotherapy

The APA released a statement calling for vets to refer to qualified physiotherapists to ensure the most appropriate and skilled treatment for all animals. A suite of social media assets was produced to further awareness within the veterinary sector and wider public.

### AHPRA/Standards

The APA made a submission to the Australian Commission on Safety and quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) on their draft National Safety and Quality Primary Health Care Standards. Within the submission we provided feedback on whether the Standards meet the needs and expectations of the physiotherapy profession.

Further details: [Submission](#)

### Compensables

#### New South Wales

The APA is meeting with SIRA on 5 March 2021 to provide feedback from members on the recent fee schedule announcement.

Discussion points will include:

- establishment of a pro-rata Consult C code for a defined cohort of workers,
- establishment of safeguards to ensure physiotherapists are appropriately remunerated for the essential 'value added' roles undertaken outside of the consult such as verbal and written liaison, report writing, completion of fax requests, and
- attitudes from some Insurers to the changes.

The APA continue to highlight the Increasing inequality between the rate that physios are being reimbursed for work cover patients when compared to private/commercial based clients, which will likely be a mounting deterrent for experienced, competent and busy providers to remain involved in the scheme.

SIRA asked for feedback from physiotherapists who provide services to people injured at work and who are an important part of the care framework delivering optimal health, recovery and quality of life outcomes to compensation scheme participants.

The Monash University evaluation of the role physiotherapists have played in the NSW scheme introduction of certification will also be updated and is nearing completion. The APA will be aiming to work with SIRA on the outcomes of the evaluation.

### Victoria

The APA has met a number of times with WorkSafe Victoria on their work around quality framework measures. Further updates will be provided in the advocacy updates.

### COVID-19

The APA has written to all state and territory Health Ministers about physiotherapists urging them to review their designation of urgent physiotherapy during lockdowns and ensure access to urgent physiotherapy if future lockdowns are required.

The APA released a joint statement with the RACGP calling on state and territory government to ensure future lockdowns allowed access to essential physiotherapy.

### Department of Veterans' Affairs

Active Choices, a University of Queensland (UQ) research project funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, is looking to recruit more physiotherapists. The aim of the project is to link and empower DVA clients towards group-based physical activity opportunities.

The purpose of the research is to collect information on best practices that may help DVA clients transition to active lifestyles that are socially connected to local communities. The UQ team is currently seeking to partner with exercise physiology and physiotherapy service providers, to offer access to the Active Choices support program for DVA clients who are interested in self-managing their physical activity. The program may also benefit DVA clients seeking to reconnect with their local communities following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

### Why get involved?

- provision of a behavioural support program that can help your clients manage physical activity,
- development of social networks and connections for your clients within local active communities,
- financial support for your clients to access group-based physical activities.

Further details: [website](#)

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### Digital health

The APA continues to work collaboratively with AHPA on the topics that have been funded by the Digital Health agency around digital health. The following have been the key activities:

- feedback on draft resources developed for practitioners,
  - telehealth checklists for practitioners,
  - telehealth checklist for consumers,
- feedback on secure messaging document developed to inform future ADHA work,
- working with AHPA on resources or survey results relating to the use of clinical software in the Allied Health sector,
- guidance about directories used by your members to provide practice information to other organisations or members of the public,
- helping to identify representatives to participate in upcoming workshops with AHPA on digital health.

## Disability and NDIS

The APA made a detailed, quality submission to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) recent consultation in response to the proposed policy directions that include independent assessments, planning and plan flexibility, and early intervention services.

The team is also preparing a submission to the Joint Standing Committee inquiry into independent assessments under the NDIS due later this month.

### Injury prevention: Prep to Play AFLW knee and head injury study

A new APA research partnerships is generating positive media and community interest. We have partnered with the AFLW, La Trobe University and Medibank to lead a new study looking at injury rates in women's community football throughout Victoria.

The project will be led by physiotherapist researchers from La Trobe and will evaluate rates of concussion and knee injuries in over 3500 women and girls aged 16+ who play Australian Rules football. Physiotherapists will be recruited to run the program in clubs across Victoria.

Further details: [website](#)  
Email: [prep2play@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:prep2play@latrobe.edu.au)  
Phone: (03) 9479 1483.

## Primary Health Networks

The APA has increased campaign efforts with the 31 PHNs nationally to further opportunities for physiotherapy at the local level as part of team-based care. We see significant opportunities to strengthen the connection of physiotherapy to the PHN network particularly in preventive strategies and to support integration. Investments in new physiotherapy-led models of care and in co-design opportunities will drive greater levels of integration.

## Private health insurance

The Department of Health announced late in 2020 a consultation paper around a second wave of reforms in the Private Health Insurance industry. The APA were involved in stakeholder updates late in January and submitted a response to this consultation paper

Further details: [APA submission](#)

The PHI reference group has recommenced for 2021.