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## **Information on the Use of Specialist Titles in Physiotherapy**

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (2009) (the National Law) came into effect in Australia on 1 July 2010, excluding Western Australia. It is anticipated Western Australia will be joining the national scheme on 18 October, 2010.

In the lead up to the commencement of the National Law, the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the Board) applied to the governing body - the Ministerial Council - to request that physiotherapy specialties be recognised under the National Law. Ministers chose to defer their decision on this matter until criteria for the assessment for specialist recognition are developed. Recent advice has indicated that it may take up to twelve months for the criteria to be developed.

The Board is committed to pursuing specialist recognition through this channel.

A list of health professions with recognised specialties and the approved specialist titles for each recognised specialty is available at the websites of the relevant national boards.

A Guideline on Advertising, common to all health professions, has been approved by the Board. In part, the Guideline states that a registered practitioner who does not hold specialist registration under the National Law may not use the title 'specialist' or through advertising or other means, present themselves to the public as holding specialist registration in a health profession. To do so would breach Section 118 of the National Law and may attract a fine of up to \$30,000.

The Board recognises the established history of specialised physiotherapy practice achieved through recognised higher education via the Australian College of Physiotherapy and is cognisant of the state of limbo specialist physiotherapists are in due to the decision of Ministerial Council to defer their decision. As such the Board considers that appropriate use of qualifications in advertising is acceptable when accompanied by wording that establishes those credentials.

For Example: "Mr P Smith, Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist (as awarded by the Australian College of Physiotherapists in 2008)"

Where specialist qualifications are not awarded by this body, such advertising or other representation is not appropriate. Only specialist qualifications as awarded by the Australian College of Physiotherapists and where the name of the College is spelled out in full may be considered appropriate.

All registered physiotherapists are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Standards, Guidelines and Codes on the National Board's website at [www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au](http://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au)