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Services for Australian
Rural and Remote Allied Health

**Response to a Consultation Document
from the Podiatry Board of Australia**

**Registration Standard for
Specialist Registration for
the Podiatry Specialty of
Podiatric Surgery**

April 2012

INTRODUCTION

Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Podiatry Board of Australia's consultation document: Registration Standard for Specialist Registration for the Podiatry Specialty of Podiatric Surgery.

SARRAH is nationally recognised as the peak body representing rural and remote Allied Health Professionals working in both the public and private sector.

SARRAH's representation comes from a range of allied health professions including but not limited to: Audiology, Dietetics, Exercise Physiology, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Oral Health, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Podiatry, Psychology, Social Work and Speech Pathology.

These Allied Health Professionals provide a range of clinical and health education services to individuals who live in rural and remote communities. Allied Health Professionals are critical in the management of their clients' health needs, particularly with chronic disease and complex care needs.

Allied Health Professionals work across the Primary and Acute Health Care Services continuum. They have significant roles in health care and health education across the sectors.

The Allied Health Professional, particularly in rural and remote areas, is required to adapt to workforce shortages and is well versed in the interdisciplinary and team approach to health care, especially for management of chronic disease and to improve health behaviour.

It is repeatedly demonstrated that skilled and supported Allied Health Professional services are essential to improving the quality of life and better health outcomes for rural and remote communities.

SARRAH maintains that every Australian should have access to equitable health services wherever they live and that Allied Health Professional services are basic and core to Australians' primary health care and wellbeing.

GENERAL COMMENTS

SARRAH has adopted an approach to provide general comments to the consultation document: Registration Standard for Specialist Registration for the Podiatry Specialty of Podiatric Surgery.

Our general comments follow:

1. SARRAH supports the approval from the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council for the specialist registration for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery. SARRAH also supports the Podiatry Board of Australia in their role in administering the registration and regulation of podiatrists and podiatric surgeons under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act*.

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2. SARRAH does not object to the initial requirements of applicants seeking specialist registration as a podiatric surgeon as outlined in the consultation document.
 3. SARRAH supports the period of registration renewal as outline in the consultation document.
 4. SARRAH believes that in relation to scope of practice for a practitioner, there should be further clarification surrounding the issue of practitioners holding specialist registration as a podiatric surgeon without also being required to maintain general registration as a podiatrist. SARRAH believes there needs to be a definition of what the extended scope of practice for a specialist podiatric surgeon is, and how this differs to that of a registered podiatrist. Specifically the consultation document states that “practitioners listed only on the specialist register will have a ‘restricted scope of practice’, limiting the practitioner [podiatric surgeon] to practice that is relevant to the scope of podiatric surgery”.

It would seem illogical that a podiatric surgeon would have restrictions to their clinical scope of practice, in contrast to the scope of practice held by registered podiatrists. In respect to this, SARRAH believes that a podiatric surgeon should maintain both registration as a specialist podiatric surgeon and as a registered podiatrist with the Podiatry Board of Australia.

5. SARRAH supports the requirements for renewal of specialist registration as a podiatric surgeon as outlined in the consultation document.

CONCLUSION

SARRAH is cognisant that podiatric surgeons, as a specialist branch of podiatry, have been performing safe and quality reconstructive surgery on bone, joint and soft-tissue structures of the foot and ankle in Australia now for over 30 years.

SARRAH supports the intent for specialist registration for podiatric surgeons as approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council, and supports the role of the Podiatry Board of Australia in the registration and regulation of podiatric surgeons who hold this specialist endorsement.

SARRAH believes that it is in the public interest to recognise the specialist registration of podiatric surgeons under a specialist register, administered by the Podiatry Board of Australia. This will ensure that podiatrists with surgical and further qualifications are recognised in the interests of public protection and safety.