

# Chapter 3

## Registration Requirements for Chiropractic Practice in Australia and New Zealand

This chapter addresses registration, certification, testing issues, and presents numbers of chiropractors registered by state or territory. Determining the numbers of registered chiropractors domiciled in each state/territory is difficult as many individuals have registration in multiple locations; thus estimates may vary.

### Registration and Certification

Although the term **registration** and **certification** are often used interchangeably, they are differentiated by their purposes.

Traditionally, registration has been required by law in order to enter certain professions. It is the most restrictive form of occupational regulation, activities covered by the occupational scope of practice may not legally be performed without prior authorization, which can only be granted by the appropriate government agency.

Certification has typically been a voluntary program that recognizes individuals who have achieved beyond the basic level of competency necessary to practice in a profession. Lack of certification does not usually exclude a person from practice, as occurs with registration (Johnson and Corgel 1983).

Registration and certification exams rely on a job analysis to provide evidence that an exam contains appropriate content.

### Standards of Testing

With the increased usage of tests in all aspects of society, particularly for registration/regulation and certification, guidelines for test construction have been prepared by the Australasian Council for Chiropractic Education (ACCE), as well as the New Zealand Chiropractic Board (NZCB). Each follows separate but specific guidelines for the construction of instruments to assess applicants for registration.

Representatives of the ACCE, universities, and the chiropractic profession, formed a

steering group in 1992 to oversee a major government-funded project to establish professional standards and competency-based assessment for Australia and New Zealand. The project involves consideration of a wide range of assessment methods and techniques, including:

- issues relating to reliability, validity, and fidelity
- the elimination of bias
- characteristics and training of assessors
- various aspects of competency-based assessment
- quality assurance measures in competency-based assessment
- and management of the assessment system.

A report on the design and field testing of the proposed system is expected in 1994.

The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* authored by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*, published by the U.S. Departments of Labor and Justice, are in agreement that, in order for registration examinations to be valid, they should be based on a job analysis. The *Uniform Guidelines* state:

“Any validity study should be based upon a review of information about the job for which the selection procedure is to be used ... Any method of job analysis may be used if it provides the information required for the specific validation strategy used.”

Content-related validity in a registration exam is evidence that the tasks addressed in the exam appropriately reflect the tasks required for successful job performance. Content validity evidence relies upon a job analysis, as indicated in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*:

“Job analyses provide the primary basis for defining the content domain. If a single examination is used in the registration or certification of people employed in a variety of settings and specializations, a number of jobs may need to be analyzed. Although the job analysis techniques are comparable to those used in employment testing, the emphasis for licensure and certification is limited appropriately to knowledge and skills necessary to protect the public...”

## **Chiropractic Registration in Australia**

The purpose of registration, according to the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, is to protect the public. This text states:

“Registration requirements are imposed to ensure that those registered possess knowledge and skills in sufficient degree to perform important occupational activities safely and effectively.”



In Australia, the six state and two territorial registration boards are responsible for the implementation of acts of Parliament which provide for the registration of chiropractors and regulation of the profession.

Persons who hold a “prescribed qualification,” i.e. a qualification granted by an institution officially recognized in a relevant state/territory act or regulation, may be eligible for registration without examination. As a general rule, only those applicants who satisfy state/territory prerequisites are allowed to take the registration examination.

Examinations in Australia are administered twice each year. Examination dates can be obtained from the ACCE, which administers competency-based assessment for applicants seeking registration by a number of Australian registration boards. The examinations assess an individual’s knowledge in such subjects as anatomy, physiology, diagnosis and symptomatology, microbiology and public health, neurology, pathology, X-ray, biochemistry, and chiropractic practice. In addition, examiners may conduct oral, psychomotor, or written examinations which assess physical examination skills, adjusting technique, radiographic interpretation, and case history-taking skills.

In recent years, grants have enabled the ACCE to research competency-based standards for entry-level chiropractors and osteopaths, with the objective of encouraging a holistic approach toward professional responsibility, accountability, and competence. Through this research, the ACCE has defined competencies, standards of practice and “best practice” concepts.

## **Mutual Recognition Act 1992**

In March of 1993, the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act streamlined the registration process. Under the provisions of the Mutual Recognition Act, a person who has current authorization to practice as a chiropractor and/or osteopath in a participating state/territory of Australia is eligible to register and practice in any other participating state/territory. Mutual Recognition provides an additional and alternative avenue for obtaining registration. As of October 1993, the participating jurisdictions were Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria. Only West Australia had not yet adopted the Mutual Recognition provisions.

## **Registration Requirements by Australian State or Territory**

A brief description of the chiropractic registration requirements in each of Australia’s states and territories follows. (A complete explanation of registration requirements may be obtained by contacting the ACCE).



**Figure 3.2**  
The number of registered chiropractors surveyed in each of the 8 states/territories.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) covers 550,000 square acres and is surrounded by New South Wales (NSW). In addition to the approximately 300,000 people who live within its boundaries, the ACT provides specialized medical and other referral services to the surrounding country area, bringing the total estimated population serviced by ACT health facilities to more than 500,000.

There are 50 chiropractors registered with the ACT Chiropractic Board. It is estimated that between 25 and 30 of these are actively engaged in chiropractic practice. Unlike other Australian states which hold separate registers for each occupation, both chiropractors and osteopaths in the ACT are registered as chiropractors. Legislation to separate the chiropractor-osteopath register is currently before the ACT Legislative Assembly.

To be eligible for registration in the ACT, an individual must be a graduate of an accredited chiropractic or osteopathic course of study, and have passed appropriate examinations or demonstrated the equivalent in training or experience over the previous 12 months. In addition, the applicant must demonstrate that he/she is of good character, and has sufficient abilities and skills, including a command of the English language.

Chiropractic or osteopathic specialties are not recognized in the ACT.



## **New South Wales**

In New South Wales, an individual may register as a chiropractor or as a chiropractor osteopath, depending on the diploma or degree granted, and the academic institution which granted it. Applicants may apply for registration under the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act of 1991.

According to the 1991 Australian Census, 799 chiropractors, and 90 chiropractors/osteopaths serve New South Wales' population of 5,731,906. No chiropractic specialties are recognized in New South Wales.

## **The Northern Territory**

Approximately 29 chiropractors are registered to practice in the sparsely populated and isolated Northern Territory, and only 15 of the 29 are actually domiciled in the jurisdiction.

The main population centers for the 1,347,225 square-kilometer territory are Darwin (pop. 78,000±), Alice Springs (pop. 25,000±), and Katherine (pop. 9,000±). All chiropractic clinics are based in Darwin or Alice Springs, although some additional centers are serviced monthly by visiting chiropractors.

Chiropractic in the Northern Territory is regulated under the *Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act*, and is overseen by the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board of the Northern Territory. Since its establishment in 1986, the Board has not had cause to consider the formal recognition of chiropractic specialties.

Under the Territory's *Work Health Act*, a person seeking chiropractic treatment for a work-related injury must be referred by a medical practitioner. Submissions from the Northern Territory Branch of the Chiropractors Association of Australia seeking amendments which would authorize chiropractors to initiate workers' compensation claims have been unsuccessful to date.

## **Queensland**

With in general a population of around 3,030,456 there are approximately 419 registered chiropractors who are regulated by the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Board of Queensland. Qualifications for registration as a chiropractor or osteopath are prescribed by the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Act of 1979-1988.

In Queensland, registration as a chiropractor is granted to individuals who hold a Bachelor of Applied Science (Chiropractic) of the Phillip Institute of Technology, now RMIT University Melbourne; Graduate Diploma in Chiropractic of the Sydney College of Chiropractic; or Master of Chiropractic of the Macquarie University, Sydney and a number of international qualifications. At this time, no chiropractic specialties are recognized in Queensland.

### **South Australia**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the estimated total population of South Australia is 1,400,622 with approximately 229 registered chiropractors. Chiropractic in Southern Australia is regulated under the *Chiropractor Act of 1991*, and overseen by the Chiropractors' Board of South Australia.

Licensing requirements include a diploma/degree in Chiropractic/Osteopathy, a current certificate of registration, at least 12 months full-time postgraduate clinical experience or equivalent experience, and a predetermined amount of Professional Indemnity Insurance. As of this time there are no chiropractors in South Australia with a formal specialty in a particular field. Treatment by a chiropractor is included in the Workers' Compensation Act of 1986 under "*Medical or Related Treatment*".

### **Western Australia**

With a population approaching 1,672,500 there are approximately 259 registered chiropractors, with 192 currently practicing chiropractors in Western Australia. In Western Australia chiropractic is regulated under The Chiropractors Act of 1964 and overseen by The Registration Board of Western Australia. Qualifications for registration as a chiropractor are dependent upon the final diploma, degree or certificate an individual holds and the school or college from which it was obtained.

There are no chiropractic specialties recognized in Western Australia. The Workers' Compensation Act of 1964 allowed chiropractors to claim fees for services, and they were given the privilege of writing First Treatment Certificates. Although there is no government reimbursement for chiropractic services, reimbursement is available through private health coverage services or insurance companies as a result of motor vehicle accidents or work-related injuries.

### **Tasmania**

Chiropractic in Tasmania is overseen by the Chiropractors Registration Board (TAS) and regulated under The Tasmanian Chiropractors Registration Act of 1982 with complementary regulations invoked in 1984. The estimated population of Tasmania is 475,000 with approximately 24 chiropractors, and 6 osteopaths. In Tasmania osteopaths are registered as chiropractors; however they are allowed to practice as osteopaths.

Applicants may apply for registration under the provisions of the Mutual Registration Legislation. At this time there are no recognized chiropractic specialties. Chiropractic care is accepted under the Tasmanian Workers' Compensation Act; thus there is reimbursement for chiropractic care.



## Victoria

Approximately 680 chiropractors are registered in the state of Victoria, which has an estimated population of more than 3,000,000.

Registration requirements are regulated by the Chiropractors and Osteopaths Regulations of 1992 and overseen by The Chiropractors and Osteopaths Registration Board of Victoria. All applicants who register must have one of the prescribed diplomas/degrees in chiropractic for this area. In Victoria, reimbursement for chiropractic services is available through Private Health Insurance Funds, and chiropractic services are included in workers' compensation and transport accident programs. Specialties in chiropractic are not recognized in Victoria at this time.



**Figure 3.3**  
The number of registered chiropractors by province.

## Chiropractic Registration in New Zealand

The New Zealand Chiropractic Board conducts examinations of all applicants for registration. Examinations are normally administered bi-annually. The NZCB has established practice standards for registrants.

Criteria established by both the Australian and New Zealand registration boards surround training and experience, minimum age, years of formal education or academic degrees, a period of residency, and evidence of good moral character.

Chiropractic in New Zealand is regulated under the Chiropractors' Act of 1982. In 1993 the New Zealand Chiropractors' Association published and adopted a plan called Vision 2000, for the future development of chiropractic. A center for chiropractic has since been established, and the first undergraduate chiropractic training program commenced in 1994. Presently there are approximately 135 chiropractors practicing in New Zealand.

At this time there are no chiropractic specialties recognized in New Zealand. The Accident Compensation Act provides for treatment reimbursement for chiropractic services only on referral from the worker's medical practitioner in New Zealand. Two main private health insurers cover chiropractic care without prerequisite medical referral.