

2021 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE AUSTRALIAN REGISTER OF NATUROPATHS AND HERBALISTS

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

2021 started off with a bang and was extremely busy in the first half of the year, with various meetings and lobbying.

Most notably the ARONAH Education Accreditation Standards were finalised. This was six months of hard work and is the most comprehensive update of education standards in Australia.

Naturopathic Regulation Research Project was a major feature all through 2021 and will continue into 2022.

The Private Health Insurance (PHI) rebate removal has again been a focus, with ARONAH attending stakeholder meetings throughout the year.

And throughout the year, ARONAH has collaborated with the members of the ANC in the writing of various government submissions as well as providing advice to stakeholders during the global pandemic.

This report overviews the key activities mentioned above, plus more.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Australian Naturopathic Council (ANC) and World Naturopathic Federation (WNF):

The establishment of the ANC in 2019 formalises the relationship with the Australian members of the WNF. ARONAH has continued working closely with the ANC during 2021.

Current members of the NCA are:

1. Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists (ARONAH)
2. Complementary Medicine Association (CMA)
3. Endeavour College of Natural Health (ECNH)
4. Naturopaths and Herbalists Association of Australia (NHAA)
5. Torrens University

The practitioner arm of the ANC in particular (ARONAH, CMA, NHAA) work closely together on various government submissions and lobbying meetings. Some of these are outlined in the section on lobbying below.

ARONAH is very proud to be an associate member of the WNF. Through the WNF, Dr Amie Steel, the ARONAH deputy chair and board member, has played an instrumental role in the creation of a document called the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) for the WNF. This 800 page document is a summary and investigation into all of the research carried out by naturopaths in the entire world over the last 30 years. Over 2,000 papers were analysed and included in this HTA. Amie has put thousands



of volunteer hours into this body of work. The profession is indebted to her and the WNF team working alongside her. The HTA should be published at the end of 2021 and ARONAH is looking forward to reading it and disseminating it as part of the ANC.

On a similar note, Naturopathic Regulation Research Project is another large project which is ongoing. This project commenced in September 2020 will ultimately further our push towards statutory registration. ARONAH is leading this project along with the wider support of the Australian Naturopathic Council (ANC). It is expected that this will be finalised in 2022.

Education sector:

In 2020 ARONAH was commissioned by Southern Cross University to conduct a review of the education standards for naturopaths in Australia, which ultimately lead to the update of the ARONAH Education Accreditation Standards. This work began in September 2020 and was finalised in early 2021. This is the most comprehensive review of education standards of naturopaths in Australia and consulted with the entire naturopathic, and health community at large, including: Australian and New Zealand naturopathic associations, WNF, TEQSA, Australian colleges, Private Healthcare Australia, Australasian Integrative Medicine Association, Federal Department of Health, Federal Department of Education, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration amongst many more.

These updated ARONAH standards ensure the profession is safeguarded into the future. The New Zealand Naturopathic association (Naturopaths and Medical Herbalists of NZ inc) have committed to adopting ARONAH's standards for all their new graduate members into the future, and both ARONAH and NMHNZ are working with the NZ colleges to transition to this. ARONAH is looking forward to working with all Australian colleges in ensuring they meet these new standards as well.

Educational course advisory meetings are an essential part of any educational institution's consultation processes with the external naturopathic community. ARONAH's involvement ensures public safety is kept front of mind when any changes to courses are discussed. ARONAH was part of the Course Advisory Committee meetings for Torrens University (SSNT/ACNT) in 2021. As far as ARONAH is aware, Endeavour College of Natural Health has not held any Course Advisory Committee meetings in 2021. We have none the less, communicated with Endeavour several times through the year.

ARONAH has provided advice on the continued rollout of telehealth into the naturopathic and WHM degrees with Torrens University, so that it is done safely and with the highest standards. ARONAH thanks Torrens for being so open and accommodating with all communication.

In March ARONAH was involved in a PhD focus group research project which is exploring the practice and philosophy of naturopathy using a complexity science framework.

LOBBYING

The first half of 2021 was busy with video calls and emails to various groups.

In March, the practitioner arm of the ANC, including ARONAH, meet with the Northern Territory Health Ministers office. The meeting was primarily focused on how the NT can help Naturopaths have more of a voice and input into health policy. Naturopaths have a valuable contribution to make, however are underutilised.

Also in March the practitioner arm of the ANC met with the South Australian Chief Allied Health Officer. This meeting was much more focused on COVID-19 itself and how naturopaths can be of assistance. We asked to be included in the messaging for government under their primary health care contacts – which the SA Chief Allied Health Officer agreed to.

The Private Health Insurance review is also continuing and ARONAH has been part of all stakeholder meetings regarding this PHI review in 2021. The review is ongoing and expected to be finalised in 2022.

GOVERNMENT SUBMISSIONS

In January ARONAH was involved in writing a Federal government, prebudget submission with the ANC. A prebudget submission is when the government invites areas of the community to contribute ideas and suggestions to the up-and-coming budget.

The ANC made two recommendations for the prebudget submission:

- Recommendation 1: Reinstate subsidy of private health insurance rebates for naturopathy.
- Recommendation 2: Dedicated Federal Government funding for naturopathic research.

During 2020 ARONAH collaborated with the ANC to write a submission to the federal government on their Preventative Health Strategy. They released their draft strategy for comment in 2021, and we updated and commented on this April 2021. As in our original submission, the usefulness of naturopaths was emphasised, in the hope that the skills of naturopaths may be further utilised by government.

SUSTAINABILITY

ARONAH Membership has increased in 2021 and Student members have been a fast-growing part of the ARONAH membership base.

ARONAH endorses Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities as part of our commitment to higher education. We are an independent provider of this service for our members and the naturopathic community as a whole. This has been an underutilised aspect of ARONAH's services and there is opportunity for growth in 2022.



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC TOWARDS NATUROPATHS AND WESTERN HERBALISTS

ARONAH is an important port of call for members of the public to complain about the treatment they have received from naturopaths and Western herbalists. Complaints regarding naturopaths and Western herbalists are steady as time goes on. Complaints generally centre around unprofessional service, missing major health issues, or reactions to treatment. In 2021 this was similar to previous years, with a slight increase in complaints regarding compliance with COVID-19 public health directives (1 in 2020, and 2 in 2021).

- 2021 calendar year = 5
- 2020 calendar year = 6 (increased by 1 from 2020 chair report due to a complaint made after the AGM)
- 2019 calendar year = 6
- 2018 calendar year = 9
- 2017 calendar year = 5
- 2016 (second half of the year) = 3*

* please note – this figure is up from 2 reported in 2020 chair report. As part of the NRRP complaints have been tracked and an additional complaint was found via an email search, which was before they were formally tracked by ARONAH.

SOCIAL MEDIA

2021 has been a quiet year on social media, similar to 2019 and 2020. However, ARONAH steadily gains followers on Facebook at over 3500 (which has grown by over 200 since last year). The affiliated group, Naturopaths for Registration also has over 2,300 members. Overwhelmingly this is still mostly positive engagement with most posts reaching likes in the double figures, as well as many favourable comments.

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