



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

## 2022 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE AUSTRALIAN REGISTER OF NATUROPATHS AND HERBALISTS

### BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

We have had a very busy year at ARONAH in 2022. We farewelled long standing board member Matthew Leach. The ARONAH board would like to acknowledge and thank Matthew for the work that he has done over the many years he served on the board and wish him well for the future. We also welcomed two new board members: Jennifer Driscoll in June, and Joanna Harnett in December. It is great to get some fresh eyes and perspectives for our work.

The main focus of ARONAH's work this year has been further progression of the Naturopathic Regulation Research Project (NRRP). This project has been 2 years of work and is nearing completion.

The other major focus has been the completion of the Health Technology Assessment on Naturopathy, which was released earlier this year but launched in Canberra in November.

The two of these things have put ARONAH, and the ANC, in an excellent position to begin the process of applying for registration of naturopaths and WHM practitioners via the AHMAC criteria. A draft of this criteria accompanied the HTA launch.

A third focus has been on the National Education Accreditation Standards, which ARONAH finalised in 2021. We have had our first application for accreditation from Southern Cross University, which is currently in progress.

As usual, ARONAH has attended various meetings across the year including in the educational sector, and for Private Health Insurance review. And we have written a small number of submissions to government – all with the focus of using the expertise of naturopaths and WHM to help improve the health of all Australians.

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

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

#### **Australian Naturopathic Council (ANC)**

Background: The establishment of the ANC in 2019 formalises the relationship with the Australian members of the World Naturopathic Federation. ARONAH has continued working closely with the ANC during 2022.

Current members of the ANC 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 main project that the ANC has continued working on this year is the Naturopathic Regulation Research Project (NRRP). This has been 2 years of gathering data, interviewing stakeholders, researching topic areas, and basically building on, and improving the Lin report from 2005. This project is almost complete, and it will culminate with an application for registration of naturopaths and WHM practitioners under The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). A draft of this application was part of the Health Technology Assessment launch, both of which are discussed further below.

Dr Amie Steel has been involved in authoring several chapters of the NRRP.

Specific other tasks ARONAH as a board has been involved in are:

- Complaints coding
- Education queries summary
- ARONAH membership retention data (a summary of this is addressed in the sustainability section below)

#### **World Naturopathic Federation (WNF):**

ARONAH is very proud to be an associate member of the WNF.

#### Health Technology Assessment:

Background: The HTA is a body of work that summarises everything to do with naturopathy: its practice, its research evidence base, and its history, amongst many other things. It is over 700 pages, 41 chapters and encompasses a summary of the world-wide research carried out by naturopaths over the last 30 years.

ARONAH board member Dr Amie Steel is not only a co-editor of this book but has also led some of the research included in this important document, and authored several chapters. Incredibly, over 2,000 papers across the world 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.

ARONAH board member Marion Volk was involved in reviewing several chapters of the HTA. ARONAH would also like to acknowledge and thank Marion for this important role as well.

The HTA was released in March and was officially launched in Australia in Canberra on November 23rd. It can be downloaded here:



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<https://worldnaturopathicfederation.org/project/health-technology-assessment-naturopathy/>

Accompanying the launch of the HTA was a draft application for registration under the National scheme. This is discussed further in the Lobbying section below.

#### Education subcommittee of WNF:

ARONAH board members regularly attend Education subcommittee meetings the WNF holds. This is where the education providers of naturopathy qualifications around the world discuss issues pertaining to education of naturopaths. Main issues that have been discussed this year are technology and learning, and telehealth.

#### **Education sector:**

##### National Education Accreditation Standards:

Background: In 2020 ARONAH conducted the most comprehensive review of education standards of naturopaths in Australia. Along with the health community at large, multiple stakeholders in the naturopathic industry were consulted including Australian and New Zealand naturopathic association, Australian colleges, WNF, TEQSA, Private Healthcare Australia, Australasian Integrative Medicine Association, Federal Department of Health, Federal Department of Education, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration amongst many more.

A year into the National education standards for naturopaths having been released, ARONAH is processing the first application for accreditation: Southern Cross University. ARONAH is looking forward to working with all Australian colleges in the future, to ensure they meet these new national education standards.

ARONAH has written and signed an MOU with the New Zealand Naturopathic association (Naturopaths and Medical Herbalists of NZ inc) who have committed to adopting ARONAH's standards for all their new graduate members into the future. Both ARONAH and NMHNZ are working with the NZ colleges to transition to this. Specifically, ARONAH Board members have met with Wellpark college to assist in this area

##### Course Advisory meetings

Background: 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 2022. As far as ARONAH is aware, Endeavour College of Natural Health has

not held any Course Advisory Committee meetings in 2021-2022. We have none the less, communicated with Endeavour several times through the year.

#### Other education undertakings

In March ARONAH was involved in a PhD research interview on:

*Research into stakeholder attitudes to the statutory regulation of unregistered health professions in Australia, that will involve consumer, regulatory, policy, and health professions stakeholders.*

#### LOBBYING

Most recently, and significantly, the launch of the HTA in Canberra was accompanied by a copy of a draft application for registration under the National scheme (NRAS) addressing the AHMAC criteria. This launch was a significant first step towards registration of naturopaths and Western herbalists in Australia. Several politicians from both major parties, as well as the Greens, and Independent MP Zali Stegall attended the event. This has given the ANC excellent contacts for people who are supportive of naturopaths in general and who may help us in this push for registration. A highlight of the event was a panel discussion, of which Amie Steel was part of.

Recently in September, former ARONAH administrator Professor Jon Wardle was on SBS's Insight program. The topic was **Should natural medicines be accepted into the mainstream, and can the two coexist?** It was good to see the issue of registration being discussed on a national scale.

In April – Jackie Arbuckle was involved in a presentation for Torrens university on the Challenges and Opportunities of registration. This was recorded and put on ARONAH's YouTube channel. Students use this information to help write an assignment on Registration.

The Private Health Insurance review is also continuing and ARONAH has been part of all stakeholder meetings in 2022. The last meeting was in the first half of the year. The review is ongoing and expected to be finalised in 2023.

#### SUBMISSIONS

Due to an election year, there have been very few government submissions. However there have been two in November, both written in collaboration with the ANC:

- ANC was invited to submit feedback on the Federal government's National Health Literacy Strategy as part of their National Preventative Health Strategy. The focus of this submission was how Naturopaths are an untapped resource and are experts in this area.
- ANC wrote a submission on Long COVID. The ANC's focus was on how naturopaths can be a valuable resource to use in the treatment and management of Long COVID

ARONAH has updated our Code of Conduct in 2022 and will put his out for comment in 2023

## SUSTAINABILITY

ARONAH is always striving to become more efficient. In the last year we have focused on streamline processes as much as possible. ARONAH has a new bookkeeper, we have transitioned to using PayPal as the main way that members ca pay their fees, and we are using a new, email program. Our longstanding Applications officer Sophia has stepped down and new applications officer, Cat has been appointed. The ARONAH board would like to take this opportunity to thank Sophia for her years of service and wish her well for the future.

ARONAH is considering some significant constitutional changes which will be discussed at the AGM and communicated to members in due course.

### ARONAH membership retention data

This was part of a summary sent for the NRRP. Since 2014, ARONAH has lost 35 members. This is mainly centred around financial reasons. People either not paying their invoices more than 2 years in a row (at which point a final attempt at contact is made, and then they are removed from our database and website), or contacting ARONAH saying they can't afford the membership fees any longer. (19/35) The second most common reason for leaving is no longer practising or retirement (7/35). Crucially only 2 have stated they have not felt any benefit from membership, and 1 has stated their views on registration have changed.

Unfortunately, ARONAH Full Membership numbers have not increased in 2022 for the first time since we formed, with 5 members leaving and 2 joining. Student members have been a fast-growing part of the ARONAH membership base.

## COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC TOWARDS NATUROPATHS AND WESTERN HERBALISTS

Background: 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 2022 these was similar reasons to previous years, with a slight decrease in complaints overall

- 2022 calendar year = 3
- 2021 calendar year = 5
- 2020 calendar year = 6
- 2019 calendar year = 6
- 2018 calendar year = 9
- 2017 calendar year = 5
- 2016 (second half of the year) = 3

## SOCIAL MEDIA

2022 has been a quiet year on social media, similar to previous years. However, ARONAH steadily gains followers on Facebook at over 3400. Facebook has changed the way it reports this data and doesn't count followers, so this data is difficult to extract. We have more "followers" than page likes. The affiliated group, Naturopaths for Registration also has approximately 2,300 members.

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