



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

## 2023 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF THE AUSTRALIAN REGISTER OF NATUROPATHS AND HERBALISTS

### BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

2023 is a sad year for ARONAH. We are farewelling long standing board members Associate Professor Amie Steel, Karen Malcom, and Deidre Bryson. The ARONAH board would like to acknowledge and thank Amie, Karen, and Deidre for the many years they have served on the board. We wish them well for the future.

The main focus of ARONAH's work this year has been further progression of the Naturopathic Regulation Research Project (NRRP). This project has been almost 3 years of work and is nearing completion.

An equal focus for ARONAH this year has been on the National Education Accreditation Standards, which ARONAH finalised in 2021. We have had an application for accreditation from South Pacific College of Natural Medicine, which is currently in progress.

ARONAH has also attended various meetings across the year including in the educational sector, and for the Private Health Insurance review, plus other stakeholders such as the HCC and TEQSA.

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 2023.

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. Southern Cross University (SCU)
6. Torrens University



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

The Naturopathic Regulation Research Project (NRRP) which began in 2020 is almost complete. The year started with a public consultation on the profession's thoughts on registration – the reasons they were for or against it. Over 140 submissions were received.

A lobbying day was held in March where strategies for approaching MPs sympathetic to registration of naturopaths, was discussed in depth.

In June there was a Town Hall meeting chaired by Rachel Arthur to discuss all things registration. Well over 1,000 practitioners attended live, while many more listened to it in their own time. These large numbers show the profession is engaged in finding out more about registration and regulation.

Ultimately the NRRP will culminate with an application for registration of naturopaths and WHM practitioners under the National Registration Accreditation Scheme.

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

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

#### General Assembly

The WNF General Assembly was held in September in Geneva Switzerland. ARONAH had 2 board members attend: Associate Professor Amie Steel, and Dr Joanna Harnett. The focus of the General assembly was twofold: to raise the bar on Naturopathic education standards and to build the global naturopathic research capacity.

#### Education subcommittee of WNF:

Education subcommittee meetings are held frequently throughout the year, and ARONAH board members regularly attend. The main issues that have been discussed this year are using digital technology in education.

#### **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 associations, 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.



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

In February this year, Southern Cross University was granted initial accreditation under the National Education Standards.

In the second half of the year, South Pacific College of Natural Medicine (SPCNM) put in an application for accreditation. Proudly, this is a direct result of the MOU that ARONAH wrote and signed with Naturopaths and Medical Herbalists of NZ, who have committed to adopting ARONAH's standards for all their new graduate members into the future. The final report from ARONAH regarding SPCNM is close to being finished.

ARONAH is looking forward to working with all Australian colleges in the future, to ensure they meet the national education standards for naturopaths.

#### 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 and Southern Cross University in 2023. As far as ARONAH is aware, Endeavour College of Natural Health has not held any Course Advisory Committee meetings from 2021-2023. We have none the less, communicated with Endeavour several times through the year.

#### **NHAA symposium**

Jackie and Amie attended the NHAA symposium in May in Melbourne.

Amie was awarded naturopath of the year by the NHAA due to her tireless work in research and furthering the profession. Jackie was made a Fellow of the NHAA, largely due to her work with the ARONAH board. It was wonderful for ARONAH to be a part of this important symposium and acknowledged in this way.

#### **LOBBYING AND MEETINGS**

The ANC held a meeting at the NHAA Symposium in person. ECNH attended Online. It was noted that it was the first meeting that SCU had attended as a member the ANC.

Jackie and Amie met with the Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC - Victoria) in June. ARONAH defined our role as a register and regulator of an unregistered profession. We spoke about ARONAH's complaints process and how we can share data with the HCC. ARONAH is hoping to meet with the other state's commissioners in 2024.



In July, Jackie met with the Australian Association of Social Workers who wanted to know information about ARONAH's complaints processes.

Also in July, Amie and Jackie met with TEQSA. We discussed TEQSA's course accreditation process and TEQSA's relationship to professional accreditation.

The Private Health Insurance review is also continuing and ARONAH has been part of all stakeholder meetings in 2023. The review is ongoing and expected to be finalised in December 2023.

## SUBMISSIONS

There have been very few government submissions in 2023.

In August the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) undertook a comprehensive review of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). ANZSCO is a skill-based classification used to describe all occupations in the Australian and New Zealand labour markets. Governments, industry, and education providers use ANZSCO to inform and shape educational pathways, skilled migration programs, and workforce strategies. ANZSCO had not undergone a comprehensive review since 2006 and ARONAH was approached as a stakeholder who could help inform their review. ARONAH's submission was done in conjunction with the ANC.

Two recommendations were made in the submission: 1) to list Western Herbal Medicine as a profession in its own right. And 2) to ensure consistency with education levels across naturopathy. Specifically, that naturopathy be listed as a *Skill level 1, degree minimum*, which is in line with the Community Services and Health Industries Skills Council.

## SUSTAINABILITY

ARONAH is considering some significant constitutional changes which will be discussed at the 2023 AGM and communicated to members in due course.

### ARONAH membership retention data

Unfortunately, ARONAH's Full Membership numbers have not increased in 2023 for the



Australian Register of Naturopaths and Herbalists

second year in a row, with 3 members leaving and 1 joining. This is mainly centred around financial reasons. People are not renewing their membership with ARONAH saying they can't afford the membership fees any longer.

## 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 generally centre around unprofessional service, missing major health issues, or reactions to treatment.

In 2023, there has been a huge jump in complaints regarding naturopaths and Western herbalists. These complaints were for similar reasons to previous years, with an additional increase in complaints around the expense of treatments and testing costs.

- 2023 calendar year = 16
- 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

On behalf of the ARONAH board, we thank all our current members and are looking forward to a productive year in 2024.

Report prepared by  
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