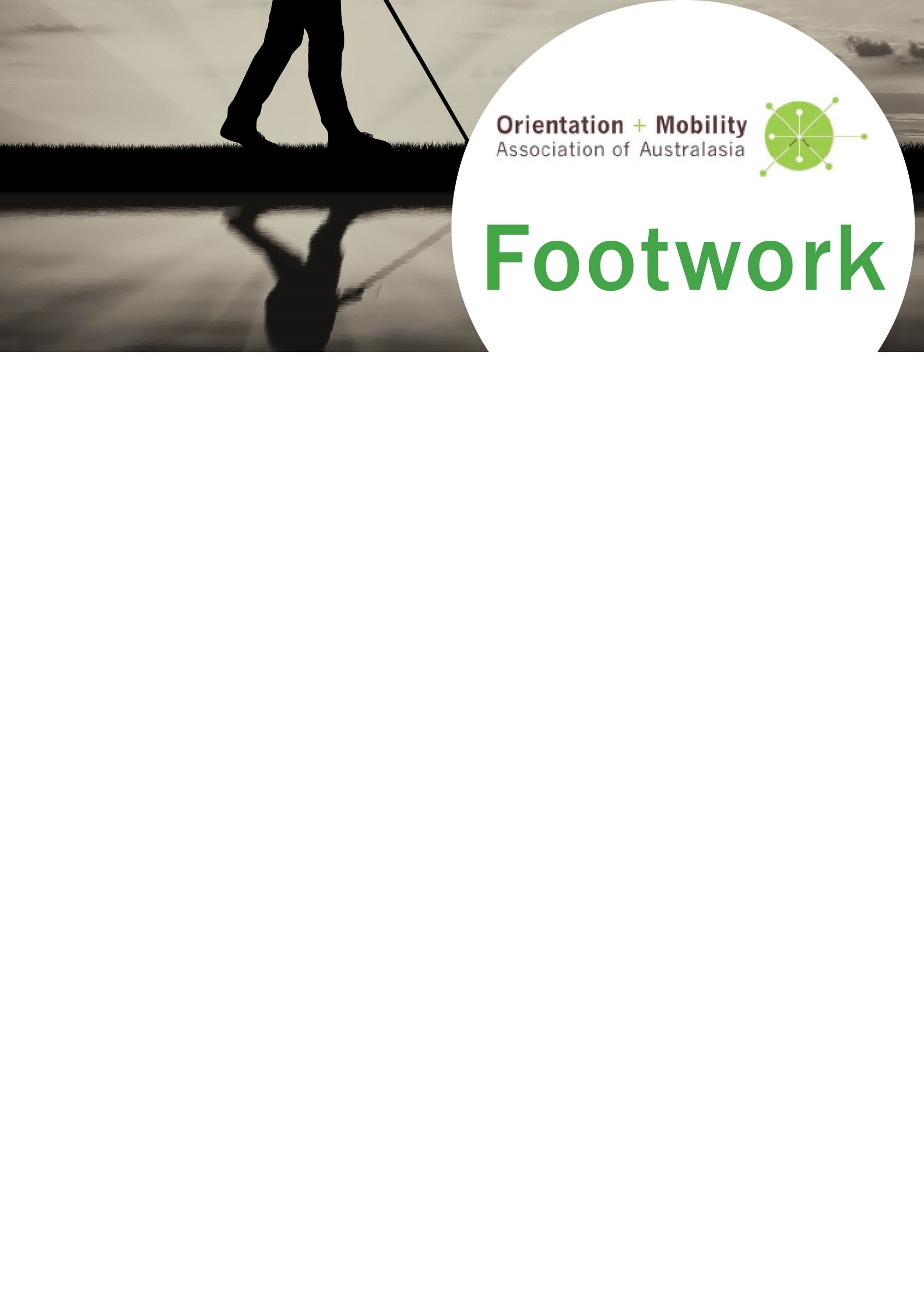
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Issue 5, June 2019

Welcome to the 5th issue of *Footwork*, aiming to keep Orientation and Mobility (O&M) employers, employees, and other stakeholders informed of developments in the O&M Association of Australasia (OMAA).

## COMS Update (Certified O&M Specialists)

At the end of March, the COMS group submission closed with 200 names on it – this is more than two thirds of the profession in Australia and New Zealand. This great response was supported by many O&M employers with information, encouragement and timely assistance with fees. Thank you! Since then the OMAA has developed 31 Core Domain Checklists showing that our O&M training programs are comprehensive.

Congratulations to our first applicant for the year, Lucy Farran (Griffith University 2016), who passed her COMS exam in May while awaiting the birth of her second baby – very productive nesting!

Lil is now working with the last twenty people on the list who need customised evidence of their qualifications and workplace learning. If you have changed names since you qualified don’t forget to include a copy of your marriage certificate or suchlike, so that your evidence is cohesive. If you didn’t get your name on the COMS list and would like to apply for COMS, the OMAA is happy to help.

Meanwhile, some people are having trouble demonstrating 3200 hours professional practice in the last 3 years because of study, travel, maternity leave, part time work, high staff turnover in the workplace, etc. If this is a problem for you please contact Lil Deverell, who will advocate for you with ACVREP\* and find out how best to proceed: [lil@deverell.net](mailto:lil@deverell.net)

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## OMAA supporting continuous professional development (CPD)

For COMS applicants, the good news is that you only need to sit for the COMS exam once. After that, you need to accrue and upload 100 recertification points as evidence of your professional development to recertify in 5 years’ time. At least 25 of these points need to be gained from ACVREP\* approved continuing education (CE) hours; for example, conferences, workshops, seminars or formal study.

The OMAA Professional Development (PD) Committee was formed at the end of 2018, to promote and support recertification. The OMAA now has an active RPPLE (Registered Provider of Professional Learning and Education) account with ACVREP\*. This means our PD Committee can review, approve and register substantial local PD events and issue the attendance certificates required for COMS recertification, showing the number of credit points gained. <https://www.acvrep.org/recert/landing>

If you are aware of a CPD event in Australia or New Zealand that OMAA could support for COMS recertification, or are designing a PD event for numerous O&M staff, then please email the PD Committee [professionaldevelopment@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:professionaldevelopment@omaaustralasia.com) considering the following:

1. **Plan ahead.** Allow at least three months before the event, for the committee to review and process the registration, then notify OMAA members about the event.
2. **Provide all the details.** Identify the relevant conference, seminar or workshop, providing a website URL and/or flier that includes the event title, dates, provider’s contact details and an outline of content.
3. **Is it relevant?** Explain how this conference relates to any of the 13 AVCREP core domains:<https://www.acvrep.org/resource/docs/COMS%20Core%20Domain%20Area%20Checklist.docx>
4. **Is it extending?** Does it involve external speakers who will expand the knowledge, skills and thinking of participants, or will it just reinforce what we already know?
5. **Is it cost effective?** The event needs to be attended by at least 3 COMS to be worth OMAA paying the RPPLE registration fees. Local organisations designing PD for O&M specialists are encouraged to contribute to the RPPLE fees.

The proposed event will be evaluated at the monthly OMAA PD committee meeting. A positive outcome will result in the event being advertised on the OMAA website including the number of CPD credit points that COMS can claim for the event. The following events have been approved for CPD points this year:

* **VISCON** in Sydney, June 2019
* **Deafblind** **International Conference** on the Gold Coast, August 2019

(<https://www.acvrep.org/recert/ce-opportunities-events?removeId=&verticalPos=&provSearch=S&id=276&locSearch=A&loc=&dateSearch=S&start_month=6&start_year=2019&end_month=9&end_year=2019>)

## COMS Q&A Sessions

The OMAA Professional Standards Committee will be offering some more COMS Question and Answer sessions through Zoom in the next few months. All are welcome to join the conversation, whether you are curious, applying for COMS, psyching up for the exam or supporting other COMS applicants. You don’t need to download anything. Just click on, or copy and paste the URL into your preferred browser to join the session:

Monday 8th July @ 1-2pm AEST <https://swinburne.zoom.us/j/999893610>

Tuesday 30th July @ 1-2pm AEST <https://swinburne.zoom.us/j/537293737>

Monday 19th August @ 1pm AEST <https://swinburne.zoom.us/j/484225147>

Tuesday 10th September @ 1pm AEST <https://swinburne.zoom.us/j/972243383>

## Registered O&M Specialists

The OMAA is currently redeveloping its website to display a Public Register of O&M Specialists. The requirements for this professional registration in Australia and New Zealand are defined by the OMAA as:

**COMS + OMAA Membership = Registered O&M Specialist**

The NDIS will use the OMAA register to identify which O&M professionals can claim full fees for O&M services. OMAA membership application forms will be changing later this year to accommodate the additional information required for professional registration.

In the meantime, when renewing your OMAA membership, please be sure to complete a renewal form as found on the website and include your name as a reference when transferring funds.

## O&M Training Pathways in Australia

Both the Vision Australia and Macquarie/Renwick O&M programs will be “rested” in 2020. This means that currently enrolled Macquarie students will complete their training but there won’t be a new student intake in 2020. This hiatus gives the O&M/GDMI industry some welcome breathing space. We need to collaborate between agency-employers and training providers towards a flexible, sustainable O&M training solution that creates COMS-ready graduates and makes best use of our precious resources (money, materials, energy and expertise). Lil Deverell will be working with stakeholders on behalf of the OMAA. Please contact Lil with any concerns or bright ideas [lil@deverell.net](mailto:lil@deverell.net)

## Freelance O&M Specialists (FOaMS)

The FOaMS network is now established with seven members and plenty of email activity around issues like business set-up, NDIS, and aids/equipment. FOaMS combine private O&M client work, casual or contract client work for O&M employers, curriculum development, O&M teaching contracts, visiting teacher work in schools, research, and assorted O&M consultancies. If you are interested in joining the FOaMS network contact the group convenor, Kim Pilic (O&M Specialist, Queensland) [kimpilic@gmail.com](mailto:kimpilic@gmail.com)

## OMAA Council

We introduced the OMAA working committees in the previous issue of *Footwork*. Did you know the OMAA also has a council of representatives from New Zealand and each Australian state and territory? The OMAA Council meets with the OMAA Executive three to four times a year via teleconference. Council members share local news, moves and reasons for celebration; they organise local networking events and maintain healthy communication in the profession; they raise any concerns with local members, discuss current issues, and pass on feedback from their local members to the Executive; and they ensure that OMAA represents all areas of Australasia in its decision making. Your OMAA Council members in 2019 are:

NZ Nicola McDowell & Shiree Arrian

QLD Kerri Weaver & Johanna Sellers

NSW Darren Moyle & Rebecca Dunkley

VIC Michelle Sharples, Alicia San Martin & Marnie Roth

SA currently vacant

WA Amy Barrett-Lennard & Paul Garwood

TAS Sean Cromwell

If you would like to become more involved in the OMAA in any capacity, or have ideas about how to strengthen the OMAA profession, please contact the OMAA president, Julia Budd [president@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:president@omaaustralasia.com)

Please circulate *Footwork* to anyone who might be interested. If you have queries about the work of the OMAA, or would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to *Footwork*, please contact [info@omaaustralasia.com](mailto:info@omaaustralasia.com)