Welcome to *Footwork*, keeping Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists, employers, and other stakeholders informed of developments in the O&M Association Australasia, Inc (OMAA).

# Happy Birthday to O&M in Australasia!

The first O&M graduates qualified in Melbourne in 1971 and shared their skillset around the region, so this year the O&M profession in Australia/New Zealand turns 50. Amazingly, we still have people working in the field who qualified in the 1970s and we’d like to capture and safeguard their stories as part of our Tom Blair Museum. If you know an O&M legend, you can invite him/her to participate in an interview with you as a video, zoom, or voice recording, or a written narrative. Alternatively, you can contact OMAA to nominate a legend and we’ll invite him/her to participate in the project. We are also keen to collect old O&M photos. Contact jeremyhillcoffs@gmail.com to ask for interview questions you can use, or to submit photos or files.

# NDIS submission

Good news! The OMAA has completed its most urgent professionalisation tasks. During May, we applied to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission requesting:

1. recognition by the NDIS of the Orientation and Mobility profession as a provider of capacity-building therapeutic supports in our own right
2. dissolution of the temporary work-around that has enabled OTs and other registered professionals not qualified in O&M to sign off O&M programs under NDIS
3. in pricing O&M services, only Registered O&M Specialists in Australasia (ROMSA=COMS+OMAA membership) receive the highest level of fees.

Our application is currently being evaluated by the NDIS Registrar.

This process has involved an OMAA website upgrade, development of a new online O&M directory, automated membership renewals, a Complaints Policy, and revision of the OMAA Constitution. You can find our updated suite of governance documents, at <https://www.omaaustralasia.com/about/quality-framework/>, including the COMS points recertification guide, and check the [O&M directory](https://omaa.wildapricot.org/directory) to see who is registered.

The OMAA is now developing factsheets on frequently asked questions to download from relevant places on the website. Please contact us if you have ideas about ways that OMAA can promote the profession and/or you can contribute content for these factsheets.

# Are you an ethical professional?

The OMAA membership form now incorporates mandatory declarations about fitness to practice, including a commitment to comply with the [OMAA Code of Ethics](https://www.omaaustralasia.com/about/quality-framework/). This is new, so the Ethics box is not yet ticked by most current members and it looks like we’re an unethical lot! OMAA members, please go to the [O&M Directory](https://omaa.wildapricot.org/directory) TODAY, log into your portal (top right) with your email address and password, scroll down, and tick that box. Our professional credibility depends on it.

# Cheerleaders needed for trainee O&M specialists

The one-year Graduate Diploma in O&M through the University of NSW is just beginning <https://www.optometry.unsw.edu.au/study/postgraduate-coursework-degrees/graduate-diploma-orientation-and-mobility>. It is great that this new program is accessible to far-flung students, but online learning and geographical separation can be quite isolating. The OMAA would like to link up these students with an O&M cheerleader for the year. This experienced O&M specialist becomes a companion on the journey, offering encouragement, coaching/mentoring, contacts with subject matter experts, advice about assignments and how to navigate the O&M profession. Contact info@omaaustralasia.com if you would like to become an O&M cheerleader (pompons optional).

https://cheerleading.lovetoknow.com/Cheerleading\_Facts

# OMAA is recruiting talent

The role of OMAA secretary is vacant, and there are also opportunities to join one of the four OMAA committees: Professional Standards, Professional Development, Communications and Membership Engagement. Consider not what OMAA can do for you, but what you can do for the O&M profession! Actually, taking on an OMAA role is a great way to make friends across the sector; you learn some leadership skills, it’s good on your CV, and you can earn 10 points/year towards COMS recertification. What’s not to like? Contact info@omaaustralasia.com

# OMAA Symposium

Save the date: 28 September 2021,10am-6pm (AEDT). The Symposium theme this year is *Adapting to Change* and the event is registered for COMS points (1point/hour). The call for abstracts is now open. Think about all the great things you have been learning that your colleagues could benefit from knowing. Check out <https://www.omaaustralasia.com/resources/professional-development/omaa-online-symposium/> for more information, including the presentation application form.

# O&M Census

It has been 10 years since our last census of the O&M profession in Australasia, during which time the industry has seen a lot of changes. During August, the OMAA plans to do a head count of O&M Specialists and GDMIs currently employed (full time, part time or casual). To get accurate numbers, we will ask for cooperation and participation from O&M agency-employers and independent service providers, relying on word of mouth to capture O&M professionals working beyond these employment contexts. We also plan to survey O&M professionals as part of our situational analysis. If you or your managers have questions you would like to ask O&M professionals as part of this survey, please contact Lil Deverell.

# O&M Assistants?

Numerous allied health professions have assistants as a defined, paid role, to support service delivery (e.g., an OT or physio assistant). However, the OMAA does not endorse a funded, itinerant O&M assistant role because O&M services take place in high risk, real world traffic/travel environments where there is no other institutional back-up or qualified O&M specialist on hand. The full O&M body of knowledge and skillset is needed to deal with the unpredictable complexities that commonly arise when providing itinerant services to O&M clients in the wider community. Instead, a fully qualified O&M Specialist often equips an available support person already involved with the client (e.g., family member, carer, professional) to reinforce selected elements of the client’s O&M program, by mutual consent. This reinforcement happens during their everyday interactions together. The approach aligns with a tailored, itinerant O&M service model and builds capacity in the client’s support team.

You are welcome to circulate *Footwork* to anyone who might be interested.
If you have queries about the work of OMAA, or would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to *Footwork*, please contact info@omaaustralasia.com

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