

22.3.25

Open letter to the membership of OMAA

Re: Letter from NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, received by OMAA Standards Committee 12 March 2025.

As announced at the recent OMAA conference, and further expanded below, the following statement was recently received from NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission:

#### “We have received confirmation from the NDIA that supports and services provided by registered orientation and mobility specialists are recognised for the purposes of NDIS funding. We have assessed that the OMAA is recognised by the industry and the disability sector as meeting the industry standard expected by this profession. Furthermore, we have assessed OMAA’s submission outlining the scope of practice, membership requirements, code of ethics, competency standards, CPD and complaints and resolution process and are satisfied that OMAA effectively regulates its members to a NASRHP standard that negates the need for an audit to determine this. We have assessed that OMAA meets the requirements for recognition as a professional body under the Verification Module per below:

#### Orientation and Mobility Specialist

#### This profession is associated with the below registration group(s):

#### • 0128 Therapeutic Supports

#### • Any registration group listed under ‘Other Professions’

#### In addition to the requirements above, this profession must also meet the following requirements:

#### Required qualifications / experience: Registered Orientation and Mobility Specialist by the Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia.

#### The Verification Guide will be updated shortly and information available on the NDIS Commission’s website.”

#### [Verification module | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/rules-and-standards/ndis-practice-standards/verification-module)

#### The above recognition is the outcome of many years of advocacy from OMAA, on behalf of its membership, to create a recognised standard for Orientation and Mobility Specialists in Australasia.

Some background:

#### In 2013, the OMAA formally adopted the ACVREP (Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals), COMS (Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist) program as part of our Quality Framework. The formal adoption was voted in at the 2013 Annual General Meeting of OMAA where a vote was cast and “all were in favour” (source OMAA AGM 2013 minutes).

#### In 2018, 132 O&M Specialists, mostly from Australia and some from New Zealand, expressed interest in COMS and asked to add their name to group submission to ACVREP, regarding advocacy for diverse pathways to access the COMS process (source OMAA PSC central file).

#### The rationale behind the position was that Australasia does not have resources for an individual certification body and that the ACVREP COMS program supports the continuing education for the O&M profession across the O&M Specialists working in the field. It was noted that O&M Specialists in Australasia have varied qualifications and diverse training pathways (source OMAA PSC central file).

#### Following the adoption of COMS by the membership, OMAA, led by the Professional Standards Committee (PSC), began advocacy with ACVREP to develop agreement on ways for Australasian O&M Specialists, with diverse training pathways that complicated access to COMS, to access the COMS certification process. Out of this advocacy, a pathway was agreed and the 13 domains table that is now in use to determine ‘comprehensive O&M Specialist training’ as part of the current OMAA determination of Specialist membership was developed.

#### OMAA continues its regular connections with ACVREP.

The current Context and NDIS recognition:

#### OMAA believes that O&M Specialists in Australasia are equal to their peer professionals, such as Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists, and educators e.g. Vision Teachers. As with these peer professionals, we need to have registration to ensure the safety of the profession and those we support or support us.

#### In our area we currently do not have the capacity to create an Australasian Certification system. However, OMAA firmly believes that this would be a forward step for our profession in the future.

#### From the letter received from the Commission noted above, for the purposes of NDIS funding, an Orientation and Mobility Specialist must be a Registered Orientation and Mobility Specialist by the Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (ROMSA).

#### At this time, to be deemed a Registered O and M Specialist (ROMSA), and be listed as ROMSA on the OMAA website, an O and M Specialist needs to be:

#### an ‘ordinary’ member of the OMAA (renewed annually)

#### and

#### a COMS (certified via ACVREP and recertified every 5 years).

#### This dual accountability ensures that registered professionals are networked with the local industry, privy to regional information and approved professional development opportunities, while also meeting international standards for the O and M profession.

Next Steps for OMAA:

#### OMAA celebrates the relationship with the Commission and NDIS that has enabled progress on recognition of our profession. We are in communication with NDIS key members to unpack further what the next steps of this will be. We believe there needs to be a transition period following this announcement from the Commission and the Executive team are liaising with the Commission and NDIS.

#### Some of the items we will be raising include:

#### What is OMAAs delegated role as a “professional body under the Verification Module”

#### What are the next steps/time frames with updating the Verification guide. This has been completed, I understand, so we will be unpacking with NDIS to ensure we have shared understanding and processes to manage any changes, to support the OMAA membership as well as key stakeholders

#### What are the ramifications for ROMSA and ordinary members for OMAA and how do we partner with NDIS to best represent our membership with processes and transition periods as we unpack this outcome

#### We will continue to communicate and update OMAA membership as we progress.

#### Yours Sincerely,



Kay Daly

*OMAA President*

*On behalf of the OMAA Executive Committee*

<https://www.omaaustralasia.com/>

