



OMAA Handbook:

The OMAA Handbook consists of 2 parts. It is linked for review alongside the 3-year strategic goals. This version is due for review to be presented at the 2024 AGM. Regular review is to ensure this document represents the current context of OMAA. The foundation document that informs the handbook is “Foundation document TOR200915 Terms of Reference Draft_6”, and available on request.

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Terms of Reference 2024-27

This 2-part document outlines the purpose, scope, membership, governance structure, roles and responsibilities of the Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (OMAA). It is a living document that is informed by the foundation OMAA Handbook version 6 (available on request). The OMAA roles defined, and information provided in this Handbook, are supported by foundation documents including the OMAA Constitution, current mission and strategic statements, procedures, scope of practice, and code of ethics, located on the OMAA website, or on request from info@omaaustralasia.com

The current OMAA Terms of Reference (TOR) documents are recommended for reading by all members. All committee and executive members of OMAA should be familiar with their content, and thus be able to evaluate the next version (3 yearly review) as OMAA moves forward.

The 2 parts of this TOR document are:

Part 1: Overview and membership

Part 2: Current Executive and Committee Overview and purpose

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1. Contents

Acronyms and Definitions	4
1. OMAA Overview	5
OMAA Purpose	5
OMAA Scope	5
OMAA Structure	6
Documents	7
2. OMAA Members	8
Purpose	8
Scope	8
Meetings	9
Roles and Responsibilities	9
Ordinary Member Definition:	9
Associate Member	12



Acronyms and Definitions

ACVREP	Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals, (USA), administering the COMS program
AER	Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, (USA).
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CC	OMAA Communications Committee
COMS	Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists
GDMI	Guide Dog Mobility Instructor
ICEVI	International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment
MEC	Membership Engagement Committee
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
OMAA	Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia
OMSAV	Orientation and Mobility Specialists' Association Victoria
PD	Professional Development
PDC	OMAA Professional Development Committee
PSC	OMAA Professional Standards Committee
RPPL	Registered Provider of Professional Learning and Education, part of the ACVREP COMS quality framework.
ROMSA	Registered Orientation and Mobility Specialist (Australasia)
SPEVI	South Pacific Educators in Vision Impairment



1. OMAA Overview

OMAA Purpose

The Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (OMAA) is the peak professional body representing the interests of its membership of Orientation and Mobility (O&M) professionals living and/or working in Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations.

The OMAA supports and promotes the O&M profession as a vital component of the human services sector in Australasia serving the needs of people with low vision or blindness. The O&M profession works in collaboration with other vision, education, allied health, disability, and access services to achieve this purpose.

The OMAA strives to offer neutrality and stability to the O&M profession, to consult and communicate transparently with members and stakeholders including O&M employers and consumers, and to steward limited resources wisely.

The OMAA advocates for standards for entry to the profession and ongoing professional practice in the Australasian region. Accordingly, the OMAA endeavors to support the recruitment and nurturing of new O&M Specialists, support and promote O&M Specialist preparation programs, source and create professional development opportunities, protect professional knowledge, treasure subject matter expertise, mediate membership grievances and disciplinary issues, and expand career pathways for O&M professionals.

OMAA Scope

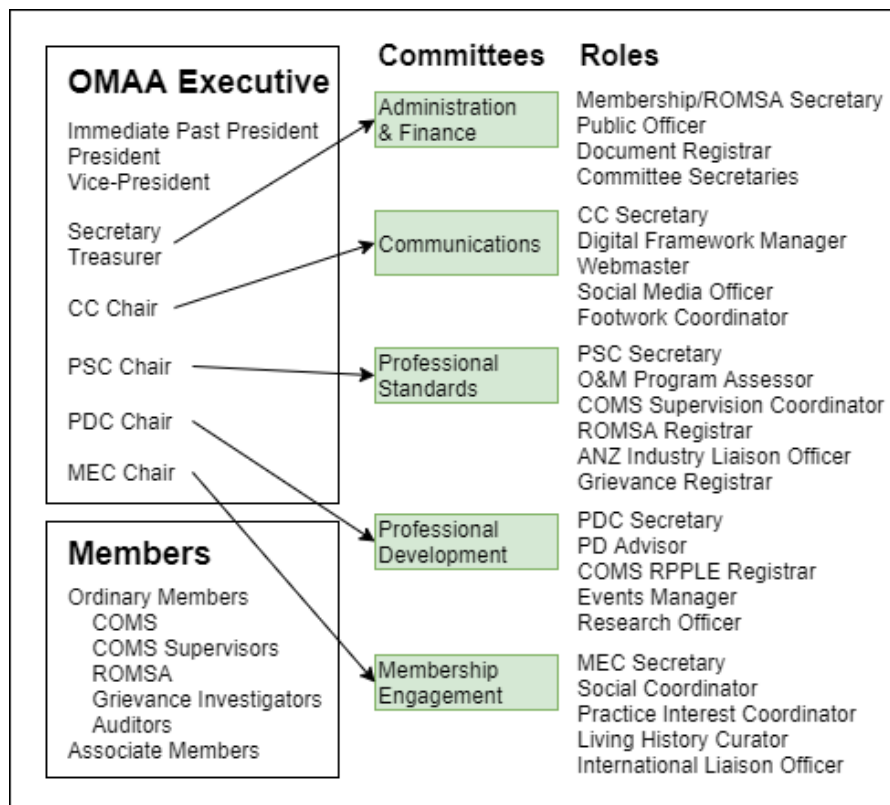
Australasia encompasses, in order of population, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations including Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Tonga, Kiribati, American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Palau, Cook Islands, Nauru, Tuvalu, and Niue (NZ). OMAA offers membership across these areas.

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OMAA Structure

In representing the interests of its members, the OMAA is governed by an Executive informed by committees. Below is a diagram that represents the aspirational OMAA structure (source: foundation OMAA Handbook (TOR) version 6).



The above structure was voted for at the OMAA AGM in 2020. As of this 2024-27 document version, due to committee capacities, the OMAA structure has not evolved to include the range of the roles included in the diagram. However, OMAA remains committed to the agreed structure and roles and as capacity allows will continue to refine and develop the governing body, with reference to the above structure. The 2024-27 structure is currently best represented as a voluntary force of:

OMAA executive committee:	Overview of Roles (see Part 2 TOR for detail):
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-President	Strategic and organizational leadership
-Vice President	Strategic and organizational leadership
-Secretary	Support Executive managing membership, supporting administrative functions and implementing resolutions and compliance procedures
-Treasurer	Oversee financial administration of OMAA; support Executive managing membership, supporting administrative functions and implementing resolutions and compliance procedures
-Across Committee Administrator (paid role)	Support Executive across committees with administrative functions
-Communications Chair*	Leads, alongside committee, OMAA functions with regard to communications within and beyond membership
-Professional Standards Chair*	Leads, alongside committee, OMAA functions with regard to O&M Standards within and beyond membership
-Professional Development Chair*	Leads, alongside committee, OMAA functions with regard to Professional Development within and beyond membership
-Membership Engagement Chair*	Leads, alongside committee, OMAA functions with regard to activities to encourage active membership engagement within and beyond membership

*All chairs and committees in OMAA work together and roles cross boundaries to ensure a collaborative supportive approach to supporting OMAA membership.

Documents

This 2-part TOR handbook primarily describes the roles and responsibilities of OMAA members and officers. Relevant supporting documents are available from OMAA on request.

These include:

- foundation documents – formally ratified regulations and policies
- procedures – work instructions developed by committees for internal use
- factsheets/lists – published by the OMAA

General procedures for document development, approval, storage, access, internal review, external audit and retention are detailed in the OMAA Document Management Procedure.



2. OMAA Members

Purpose

OMAA membership provides a network of relationships and opportunities to support practice standards, wellbeing, and professional development. Membership also expresses a personal commitment to the wider O&M profession. Solidarity, through OMAA membership, gives the O&M profession a unified voice in community, industry, and government to move forward on professional issues that affect the industry. Without solidarity the O&M Profession loses its voice.

Scope

There are currently (as per foundation TOR drafted 2020) two OMAA membership categories for Orientation and Mobility Specialists: “Ordinary” and “Registered” members, known as ROMSA (Registered O&M Specialist of Australasia). There is also associate membership for those who are not Specialists as defined by OMAA criteria. An application for OMAA membership is made through the OMAA website, where there is information about current fees and the facility to pay online.

An Ordinary and ROMSA OMAA member is expected to adhere to ethical and professional standards, undertake continuous professional development, and aspire to exemplary person-centred practice. To become an ordinary member the O&M Specialist must show evidence of having undertaken a comprehensive O&M training programme, as evidenced by the OMAA 13 domains document, available on request.

The OMAA Quality Framework includes foundation documents that guide O&M professional practice in Australasia (see OMAA website).

Ordinary members can apply for professional certification (COMS) and registration (ROMSA), enabling them to serve as a COMS supervisor. ROMSA members are responsible for alerting OMAA as to their COMS recertification status to ensure that the information OMAA has is current as to their professional certification. ROMSA status for members is desired by OMAA to ensure clear evidence of professional status. However,



Specialists have the professional choice to remain Ordinary members, recognising their comprehensive O&M training and service as a Specialist O&M service provider.

Associate members are not eligible for COMS or ROMSA but can serve as a grievance investigator or auditor.

Meetings

OMAA members meet formally at the OMAA Annual General Meeting in November each year. This is the anchor point for election of new officers, adoption of the annual budget, and ratification of major OMAA decisions and policies.

During the year, members network through activities such as OMAA Facebook, Professional Development and Community of Practice events. These may be online and/or face to face, such as Australasian O&M conferences, online symposia, and professional practice meetings via Zoom. OMAA strives to facilitate knowledge sharing by working to offer benefits to members for attending events, such as COMS points and fee discounts. Members also connect through emails, social media, blogs and newsletter posts. These forums enable members to identify subject matter experts and mentors. Regular meetings and service with others as an OMAA officer also builds productive and mutually rewarding relationships.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ordinary Members are evidenced as comprehensively trained fully qualified O&M specialists, and Associate Members are not (see constitution for further information on membership).

Ordinary Member Definition:

Ordinary OMAA members include O&M specialists and Guide Dog Mobility Instructors (GDIMs) who

- have successfully completed a comprehensive O&M qualification, as evidenced by completion of the 13 domains document (available from OMAA) and this evidence having been accepted by the OMAA executive. They are seen as able to apply/in process for international

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certification (COMS) and Australasian registration (ROMSA), or equivalent, even if they have not done so. Ordinary members are expected to continue professional development but OMAA has no evidence based vehicle to monitor this.

- have approximately 80 hours experience undertaking community travel, peer teaching and/or activities of daily living with simulated low vision and/or blindness.
- have practiced at least three months full time equivalent in the past 5 years.
- renew membership annually.
- uphold the OMAA Code of Ethics in professional practice.
- comply with local laws and requirements (e.g., Working with Children check).
- have not been, and are not currently, the subject of conduct, performance, legal or health proceedings whilst practising in a professional capacity.
- maintain or are covered by professional indemnity insurance.
- undertake continuous professional development.

NB: OMAA Executive reserves the right to 'grandparent' specialist service providers on a case by case basis



Ordinary Members who are also Certified O&M Specialists (COMS) with ACVREP are termed “ROMSA” – Registered O&M Specialist in Australasia

An ordinary OMAA member with COMS is immediately eligible to apply for OMAA Registration. After submitting evidence of COMS, a Registered O&M Specialist in Australasia is listed on the OMAA public register on the website and receives an OMAA registration certificate, and is able to display the ROMSA acronym. OMAA advocates for members to become ROMSA because:

Professional certification and registration are important processes to:

- assess and establish parity between diverse O&M training pathways.
- declare publicly who is fit to practice as a fully qualified O&M specialist, transparently evidenced via the COMS system.
- provide summary information, contact details and choices to O&M consumers.

About COMS and ACVREP

In 2013, the OMAA adopted the USA-based COMS program which provides:

- an independent certification program to examine who is eligible to practice as an O&M specialist
- an internationally recognized industry benchmark for entry level O&M professionals
- an agreed international standard for professional qualifications
- the COMS body of knowledge – essential content to be included in any comprehensive O&M personnel preparation program
- a process for evaluating applied skills in a COMS-supervised placement/internship
- an international online exam
- a framework to account for continuous professional development towards recertification every five years.

The COMS program is administered by the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) in the USA. The ACVREP Board is



committed to making the COMS program internationally accessible. The OMAA has worked, and continues to work, with ACVREP to interpret the COMS Handbook and clarify eligibility requirements for applicants outside the USA and Canada, including applicants from Australia and New Zealand.

A COMS application is a three-stage process, with fees for each stage.

1. A COMS Eligibility Application requires evidence of O&M qualifications and COMS-supervised workplace experience (or equivalent).
2. The COMS Exam is completed online at a local exam centre.
3. The COMS Certificate arrives in the mail.

Following COMS certification, the OMAA registered member is responsible to inform OMAA as to their recertification date and status to maintain their ROMSA membership.

Associate Member

Associate OMAA members might have undertaken some O&M training, offer limited or supervised O&M services, or simply wish to stay abreast of developments in the O&M profession. Associate members might include:

- trainee/student O&M specialists and GDMLs.
- dog guide trainers.
- community-based rehabilitation fieldworkers.
- O&M assistants (voluntary or paid).
- O&M employers, managers or co-workers.
- allied health, education or access professionals.
- O&M clients, parents and friends