



CLEAR THE CONFUSION – ONE CLEAR DEFINITION FOR PERMITTED HEALTHCARE SERVICES

There is currently widespread confusion in the massage and myotherapy industry after recent government announcements shutting down “non-essential services”.

Unfortunately, there has been no clear, national definition of permitted healthcare services. Some States and Territories have adopted the Commonwealth’s unclear wording. Other States and Territories have provided their own, clearer definitions. The national approaches are summarised in Attachment 1.

This is resulting in unnecessary fear and confusion in the community. This is exacerbated by police across Australia visiting legitimate remedial massage clinics and warning them to shut down or be fined.

We urge the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to adopt **one single, clear definition of health professions permitted** to operate on an in-person basis under the current Covid-19 restrictions. We have provided three possible definitions below.

Background

Beauty and personal care massage parlours were included in the PM’s 24 March list of prohibited non-essential services. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) [lists](#) “massage parlours” in a list of “highly discretionary services that require close and prolonged personal contact between the service provider and client”.

What is Remedial Massage?

Remedial massage is a healthcare service that “aims to reduce or eliminate pain, and restore normal function of muscles and joints. It can help increase joint mobility and flexibility, stimulate the lymphatic system and promote blood flow, particularly to injured areas” ([Medibank](#)).

What is Myotherapy?

Myotherapy is a health service that specialises in assessing, treating and preventing specific musculoskeletal conditions and somatic dysfunction. Myotherapy uses clinical examination skills to locate the sources of symptoms and identify dysfunctions, then design and implement patient-specific treatment and management programs.

Myotherapists work as:

- the first point of treatment, implementing expert knowledge of the function and dysfunction of the soft tissue of the body in relation to movement; and/or
- a specialised member within an interdependent multi-disciplinary team of health professionals.

Clear the Confusion – One Clear Definition for Permitted Healthcare Services

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There are two broad types of healthcare professionals in Australia:

- AHPRA-registered professions – eg physiotherapy, medical. These occupations are regulated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.
- unregistered professions – eg massage. These occupations are underpinned by a National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers, overseen by the Healthcare Complaints Commissions. Private health insurers also provide oversight as detailed below.

Three Options to Defined Permitted Healthcare Services

Option 1: PHI-registered providers. Health professionals who meet certain criteria can apply to the private health insurers (PHIs) for a provider number. This allows payment of PHI rebates for services performed by that individual provider in a particular location (a separate provider number is provided for each location).

Most PHIs follow Medibank in determining who is eligible for a provider number. PHIs have robust fraud detection mechanisms, including de-registering and referring for prosecution fraudulent providers.

Option 2: AHPRA-regulated professions. The list of AHPRA-regulated professions is found in the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009*. (This would exclude both massage and myotherapy.)

Option 3: Commonwealth Department of Health. “In very broad terms, allied health professionals provide services to enhance and maintain function of their patients (clients) within a range of settings including hospitals, private practice, community health and in-home care. There is an emphasis on healthy lifestyle and on independence; whether that is physically, psychologically, cognitively or socially. The allied health workforce works across the spectrum from acute to primary care and aged care. Allied health professions also have a large role in the management of people with disabilities from childhood to adult.” ([Review](#) of Australian Government Health Workforce Programs.)

We urge the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to adopt **one single, clear definition of health professions permitted** to operate on an in-person basis under the current Covid-19 restrictions. We have provided three possible definitions to choose from.

Sincerely,

Attachment 1 - Current Australian Government Approaches to Massage and Myotherapy

Attachment 2 – Announcement by Association of Massage Therapists – no massage therapy from 25 March



Jim Olds, CEO



Tricia Hughes, CEO



Charles Wurf, CEO



Anna Yerondais, CEO

Attachment 1 - Current Australian Government Approaches to Massage and Myotherapy

Jurisdiction	Approach	Comments	Remedial Massage Allowed?	Myotherapy Allowed?
Australian Capital Territory	Beauty and personal care service spas and massage parlours are prohibited. See here under “which business activities are prohibited, which are not?”		?	?
Commonwealth	Beauty and personal care service spas and massage parlours are prohibited . 26/3/20 Principal Medical Advisor meeting with allied health professions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government encourages healthcare workers to continue working, to help ease the pressure on our hospital system; and • where you don’t need a face-to-face consultation, government encourages audiovisual consultations 		?	?
New South Wales	Spas, nail salons, beauty salons waxing salons, tanning salons, tattoo parlours or massage parlours are prohibited as “places of social gathering”.		?	?
Northern Territory	The following is closed to the public: “4(f) a place that provides yoga, Pilates, barre, massage or other wellness services”	“9 To avoid doubt, these Directions do not prohibit any service or activity provided or conducted electronically or online.” Link	X	?
Queensland	Beauty and personal care service spas and massage parlours are prohibited , except: “health services provided by health practitioners registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, with social distancing observed to the extent possible”	Prior to these directions, Queensland Health informed associations that it would exempt Medibank-registered providers.	X	?
South Australia	Beauty and personal care service spas and massage parlours are prohibited .		?	?
Tasmania	Spas and massage parlours must be closed.		?	?
Victoria	Beauty and personal care massage parlours are prohibited .		?	?
Western Australia	Massage parlours must be closed.		?	?

