

## Position Statement

### Use of the titles **Physiotherapist, Physical Therapist and Physio**

#### The Board's Position

In New Zealand the titles:

- **Physiotherapist;** and
- **Physical Therapist;** and
- **Physio,**

along with associated abbreviations and descriptions of physiotherapy, may only be used by persons who are registered, and qualified to be registered, under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act (2003) as physiotherapists with the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this Position Statement is to provide clarity of what titles can be used by registered physiotherapists.

#### Introduction

There are occasions when the perception by the public and some health professionals may be unclear as to whether the titles being used by individuals mean that person is a registered physiotherapist.

Clarity around the use of the titles for physiotherapists is essential in order to avoid any misunderstanding by the public about the qualifications and registration status of persons using such titles.

This Position Statement represents the Physiotherapy Board's position on the use of titles under the HPCA Act. The Board notes that whether a non-registered person is committing an offence by using a particular title is ultimately a matter for a court to determine.

#### Legal Context

In New Zealand titles of regulated health practitioners are protected by the HPCA Act (2003).

This is detailed in Part 1, s7 of the HPCA Act (2003) which states in Key Provisions:

*“Unqualified person must not claim to be health practitioner*

- (1) A person may only use names, words, titles, initials, abbreviations, or descriptions stating or implying that the person is a health practitioner of a*

*particular kind if the person is registered, and is qualified to be registered, as a health practitioner of that kind.*

*(2) No person may claim to be practising a profession as a health practitioner of a particular kind or state or do anything that is calculated to suggest that the person practises or is willing to practise a profession as a health practitioner of that kind unless the person—*

*(a) is a health practitioner of that kind; and*

*(b) holds a current practising certificate as a health practitioner of that kind.”*

And

*“(5) Every person commits an offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine not exceeding \$10,000 who contravenes this section.”*

(“Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act,” 2003)

## Context

In the world wide context the “World Confederation for Physical Therapy (WCPT) claims exclusivity to the professional names “physical therapy” and “physiotherapy”. It further asserts that the professional titles “physical therapist” and “physiotherapist”, and all abbreviations referring to these titles (e.g. “PT”, “FT”, “physio”) are the sole preserve of persons who hold qualifications approved by WCPT’s member organisations” (WCPT, 2013).

In Australia the titles ‘Physiotherapist’ and ‘Physical therapist’ are protected under the National Law (AHPRA, 2014). In the United Kingdom the titles ‘Physiotherapist’ and ‘Physical Therapist’ are protected by law (HCPC, 2014).

The Ministry of Health website states:

*“The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) is about public safety. Its purpose is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure the lifelong competence of health practitioners.”*

*“Important key protections are in place, with provisions that will ensure that:*

- only health practitioners who are registered under the new Act will be able to use the titles protected by the Act or claim to be practising a profession that is regulated by the Act”*

(“About the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act ”, 2014)

## Supporting Information

About the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2014). 2014, from

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act/about-health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act>

AHPRA. (2014). AHPRA FAQ - What are the protected titles in the National Law.

2014, from <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Support/FAQ.aspx>

HCPC. (2014). About Registration - Protected Titles. Retrieved 2014, from

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/protectedtitles/>

Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act. (2003). *Ministry of Health*. Retrieved

from <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act>

WCPT. (2013). Policy statement: Protection of title. 2014, from

<http://www.wcpt.org/policy/ps-protection-title>