

Professional Certification launches – a winner for therapists, consumers and GPs!

Consumers and GPs will have greater clarity about the professionalism and quality of massage therapists using Massage & Myotherapy Australia's new national best practice and quality assurance certification scheme, the first in the massage industry.

Anouncing the new national Scheme, Andrew Gallagher, President of Massage & Myotherapy Australia, said, 'For the first time, consumers and medical practitioners will be able to access an independent quality assurance regime, involving professional massage therapists and myotherapists who are Certified to a protected uniform title of practice that meets high industry standards'.

'Certification will provide a greater level of confidence and certainty about remedial massage and myotherapy services offered in local communities,' Andrew added in the official media announcement recently.

Three years in development, involving wide health sector consultation and an extensive Pilot Study, the Scheme includes approvals from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and IP Australia (under the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science).

Certex International was instrumental in ensuring the Certification scheme provided a consistent and reliable national Best Practice Standard (BPS) and Quality Assurance (QA) model for the Australian massage and myotherapy industry. This also ensures that the Certification scheme meets the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ accreditation) standard (jas-anz.com.au).

In the media announcement, the Association pointed out that Australia has a workforce of around 20,000 massage therapists, many of whom are highly qualified professionals. The scheme offers all career professionals a clear opportunity to distinguish the standard and quality of their services.

'While the majority of our 8,600 members already have tertiary level remedial massage qualifications, in the not too distant future, we expect to have a significant proportion and many non-member therapists completing Certification. This will provide a single framework and national network of quality-assured therapists that consumers and health professionals can access with confidence,' Andrew said.

Certification involves therapists completing three distinct stages:

1. Application and criminal record check

Interested therapists complete the Application Form and the CrimCheck Form to determine if they are suitable.

2. Completion of the Self-Assessment

An extensive Workbook involving information about the therapist, the clinic, and the six core areas of the Standard involving membership-patient/client treatment, patient/client management, facilities and equipment, employer (if applicable) and quality management practices.

3. Certification site support visit

An inspection by a trained Certification Site Support Assessor (CSSA) visiting the clinic and confirming all of the information provided in the Self-Assessment Workbook.



What will Certification mean for you?
Next page: four members of the Pilot Study review their experiences.

Congratulations! Now we have a National Standard

**A message from Ann Davey, Massage & Myotherapy Australia
Association Manager and Certification Team Leader.**

After nearly four years' work, we proudly announce that the Massage & Myotherapy Australia Certification Standard has been approved by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the trademark confirmed by IP Australia.

What does this mean? Following a combined effort by many contributors, we can finally say that there is a nationally recognised Standard for our industry – massage and myotherapy. While Massage & Myotherapy Australia owns the Standard and the Certification Program, it is open to all eligible practitioners nationally, regardless of the Association of which they are a member.



Meet some of our newly Certified practitioners

Four recently Certified practitioners shared their experience and comments after participating in the Massage & Myotherapy Australia Pilot Study. They are Charlotte Keane, Sarah Underwood, Allana Collopy and Kevin Skillen.

Why is Certification important for our profession?

'Certification informs the public that my business has been externally assessed to ensure best practices in delivery of service,' Charlotte Keane says. 'It elevates my business away from others who may have poor standards and practices.'

'There are too many providers who cut corners, underpay staff, and do not record notes clinically, etc. Being a Certified Myotherapist will not be possible for someone without the relevant qualifications. The Certification scheme enables providers doing the right thing to be rewarded and identified,' Charlotte adds.

Sarah Underwood also believes Certification is extremely important because it will improve the professionalism of qualified therapists and establish a benchmark system which will ensure therapists who meet these standards are recognised for doing so.

'Certification is important to me and my clinic because my patients can be confident that not only am I qualified and continue to increase my knowledge and skills through CPE, but I am also maintaining high standards in terms of comprehensive documentation, record keeping and facilities,' Sarah adds.

'A check and tick measurement,' is how

Allana Collopy describes Certification. 'Practising practitioners can use Certification as a "check and tick" measurement to ensure that the business compliance is kept to a high standard.'

Respect and safety are also important to Allana: 'I feel that the safety of practitioners and their clients is currently not often above board. If these "checks and ticks" are put in place, this then supports a future for the industry with rules and regulations so that practitioners know how to treat a client at all times – with respect and safety. Certification will also offer practitioners a measurement they can use to educate their clients to treat them (as practitioners) with the same respect and safety.'

'I hope to see that because of the implementation of standards through Certification in the industry of massage and wellness, we should start to have authenticity and credibility as a profession in Australia,' Allana says.

Kevin Skillen summarises: 'As the massage and myotherapy industry is not regulated it is important to have some strong benchmarks and guidelines for therapists to work with. It is about leading the way for the profession and setting high standards and creating a sense of professionalism and safety for the general public. Certification provides this identity.'

Importance to practitioners' clinics

Each of the practitioners felt that Certification was very important for their own clinics as well as for the profession in general. Kevin explains; 'We have been operating in Melbourne's Seddon/Yarraville area for 16 years and have a strong loyal client base, however we need to demonstrate to our clients and the public that we are continually evolving and improving not only our practical services but also our practice. I believe Certification will provide this evidence to the public that we are highly professional and meet the highest Industry standard. Our area has recently seen quite a few new massage shops open up that provide quick, cheaply priced massage and we want to demonstrate to the public in the area that quick and cheap massage does not always provide the best outcome for them.'

Charlotte says: 'I think it is important for my business so I can advertise my good standards and quality procedures and be differentiated from providers doing the wrong thing. Certification enables constant improvement and demonstrates that I am accountable for business decisions and policies to safeguard employees and the public.'

Allana had auditing experience when she started her business. She explains: 'We practised compliance and had implemented



| Charlotte Keane



| Sarah Underwood



| Allana Collopy



| Kevin Skillen

“
 After being in
 business for 16 years
 it did reinforce
 that what we were
 doing was right. It
 also highlighted
 some simple and
 easy ways in which
 our business could
 be improved and
 enhanced.”

standards and measurements throughout our business from the moment we opened because of my history as an auditor. But this does not make us safe in the grander scale of things when it comes to the larger community of health and wellbeing practices in the current Australian complementary health industry.

‘The Certification process has lifted our standards to an even better level and has made us a place of choice for clients and of reference from conventional medical practitioners. These workplace rules and regulations we have set up have enabled my business to maintain a 5-star standard – as voted by our clients. The main feedback from our clients has been that they feel reassured, safe and respected. The contractors also feel safe and feel comfortable that they will be treated in an appropriate and professional manner at all times by clients and also by the business. The standards that protect our clients and our businesses as well as our individual contractors working in our business gives our clients a grievance process and also a reliability that they have a fallback authority as well as the individual business if we do not comply with the standards we set up.’

Systems, Policies and Procedures

These practitioners all had some form of systems and policies and procedures in place before participating in the Pilot study – however, all found these are now improved.

Charlotte had the advantage of working with the Certification Team almost from the start and in fact shared some of her policies as models for Certification. However, she says; ‘Some of my policies (such as my Privacy Policy) needed to be updated, so it was good to have this pointed out. Sometimes when you are busy running a business, you don’t realise that

you are not updating such things as policies for client undressing, minors, etc’.

Sarah says that prior to participating in the Pilot study, she did not have a Cancellations policy or a Refunds policy, but these were easy to produce. ‘I had most of the other Policies and Procedures in place and any that I did not have were easily accessible on the Massage & Myotherapy Australia website.’

Allana had most of the systems and policies and procedures in place prior to participating in the Pilot Study because of her auditing history. ‘I was comfortable that I knew a lot about the business side of the industry,’ she says. ‘But this did not convince my colleagues or peers. This made me feel very alone and vulnerable. What I learnt through the process of the program was that as a business owner and also a practitioner in the industry how easy it would be to become a target for litigation and to drop into unsafe practises if you did not check and tick your processes and practises.’

‘I also started to look at our industry as a user,’ she says. ‘And I felt that we had a lot of issues in the industry and how little it was being checked ... I now have a better outlook toward the industry and its future and I’m happy to be a part of the new processes.’

Sarah felt that taking part in the study definitely reinforced what she already knew. ‘But I also learnt a few extra things too. After taking part in the study my systems were improved. I switched to a different booking system and installed an EFTPOS for ease of payments. It was not a requirement of the study to do this but when I took the time to review my practises, I realised small changes could have positive outcomes.’

Kevin says his practice did have systems and

Advice to other members considering Certification

'If you are reading this and considering taking part in the Certification process, my advice would be JUST DO IT! I believe our industry needs this.'
Sarah Underwood

'If you want to be taken seriously in our industry, I'd encourage everyone to get their Certification and to keep it current. Use it as a tool for constant improvement in your business so you can provide the services to your customers that exceeds their expectations and so that you can provide an amazing environment in which to employ others so that everyone benefits and is safe.'

Charlotte Keane

'I suggest that you definitely do this. I think this is the way the industry will be changing over the next 10 years and I also believe it will make individuals and their businesses more attractive for new clients. If you have Certification, it could, in the future, be a measurement that governments, banks and financial institutions use to grant access to financial support or grants as has happened in other industries in Australia.'

Allana Collopy

'I highly recommend it as an excellent way to quality check yourself and your business. It demonstrates your professionalism and that you are meeting the highest levels of quality for the massage and myotherapy profession.'

Kevin Skillen

processes in place but had limited documented policies in place. 'Certification has allowed us to consider the requirement for written policies and to further document our processes and procedures. This has streamlined the way we operate and assists our staff to function autonomously.'

'The requirements to meet the Certification Standards have now been implemented across the whole practice which has made it easier to manage the practice, complete orientation for new therapists and ensures the smooth operation of the practice when I'm not there.'

'The Pilot Program was a great learning experience,' he adds. 'I was one of the first therapists to do the Pilot Program and while I was nervous about the Site Support Visit, it was easy. It is well-named as I felt supported through the whole visit. After being in business for 16 years it did reinforce that what we were doing was right. It also highlighted some simple

and easy ways in which our business could be improved and enhanced.'

Charlotte summarises: 'I learnt that I am doing a lot of great things in my business but there is always room for improvement. I learnt that reviews are not something to be afraid of or worried about. The Certification Site Support Assessor (CSSA) is not trying to catch you out. It's an opportunity for a business to grow and develop to achieve high standards that ensure the longevity of your business for many years to come.'

'The old adage 'Get it right the first time' saves a lot of pain and problems for the future - the review helps you strive to get things right,' she adds.

Time involvement

There are three stages to the Program. The first is completing an Application Form and the Criminal Record Check.

The second stage is to complete the Workbook which has been designed to be simple and efficient. Allana found it took her only two hours to complete the Workbook. Sarah said: 'I work full time and have three children, so my life is pretty busy but completing the workbook didn't take too long at all. It's hard to put an actual time but I completed it over the course of a weekend in-between the grocery shopping, taking children to sport, housework etc.' Kevin found that the workbook took around two hours to complete, edit and re-check prior to it being in a suitable state to submit.

The third stage is the Site Support Visit. Sarah said her Site Support Visit involved giving the CSSA a guided tour of her clinic, an informal visit which took approximately an hour. She checked the systems I had in place and we had a great chat, very relaxed. Kevin found the site support visit took around 45



I realised small changes could have positive outcomes.

minutes to complete from start to end. Allana says 'Mine was broken into two – a site visit and a skype visit as I moved clinics – about two hours in total'.

As Charlotte was part of the initial set up, she kindly spent an entire day with the audit team as part of the pilot program. 'Today, I understand a Site Support Visit takes approximately one hour. This is an achievable time investment for therapists and one that does not impact extensively on a regular day. The Site Support Visit is a great way to find out all the ways you can make your business better.'

Benefits to you: using the Certification Mark

'The Certification Mark can be used on any marketing material you use and can help to promote your clinic,' Sarah explains. Allana agrees: 'As a Standard that my clients can measure us by it will be placed on our marketing and also our premises and will be in my signature,' she says.

Charlotte says: 'I will proudly advertise my certification on my website and email signatures. It will be a tool to stand out from the crowd and will be particularly useful in advertising – a point of difference and accomplishment. I will educate my customers to only seek out Certified practitioners for their massage and myotherapy needs.'

Kevin summarises: 'I will use it to demonstrate that I meet the highest quality standards in all marketing material and to demonstrate to the public that we are the practice of choice for them.'

- > **Charlotte Keane** AdvDip – Advanced Diploma of Remedial Massage (Myotherapy). Charlotte's business is City Haven Massage Therapy, and she manages two clinics in the Melbourne suburbs of Parkville and Mont Albert and employs four clinic-based employees and three mobile contract staff.
- > **Sarah Underwood** LCSP (Phys), RMT, DNT – Diploma of Remedial Massage, Diploma of Sports Therapy, Cert IV Training and Assessment, Diploma of Vocational Education and Training. Specialist training/certificates: Advanced Remedial & Manipulative Therapy, Remedial exercise, Orthopaedic Massage, Therapeutic Ultrasound, Neuromuscular Therapy, Deep Lymphatic Drainage, Infant Massage Instructor, Dry Needling. Sarah's clinic is called Koroit Remedial. She works on her own and does not employ any staff.
- > **Allana Collopy** Dip Y.T (HHC), Dip.RMT (AIAS), Cert.IHM (CSSM), Cert.Reflex (CSSM), Cert.Med.Hol.Couns (IMTTA), CertIV.Mas.The.(AIAS), Cert MFR (ADV TRG), Cert SST (S.A.M.A.), Cert IVHHDC (IMTTA), Adv Dip.CSMC (IMTTA), Dip. MISIS (M.W.T.), Dip. EC (M.W.T), Cert. MSP , Cert INT/EXT AUD (QACAS), Cert. ONC MASS, Cert. AN MASS, BHSc Myotherapy Student. Allana's business is Sorrento Massage & Natural Therapies. It is a one-person clinic with six consultants, (four RMTs, one Remedial Massage and Wellness Therapist and one Massage & Beauty Therapist).
- > **Kevin Skillen** Advanced Diploma of Myotherapy, Diploma of Remedial Massage, Diploma of Vocational Education & Training Practice, Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training, Diploma of Health Science (Massage), Certificate IV in Health Science (Remedial Massage), Bachelor of Business (Banking & Finance). Kevin's business is Seddon Therapies and it is a joint venture (but not a partnership) with another Remedial Massage Therapist.

Differentiate yourself from the competition with Certification.

'This year will mark my 16th in our industry. When I began my career, I was amazed by how effective touch therapies are to people's wellbeing and passionate about providing my new-found skills to the community. However I found that professional standards and quality practices were an area lacking in the industry.'

Over the years, many of us have grown as therapists with improved standards and levels of professionalism. I began my training in 2003 studying a Certificate IV in Massage Therapy, and now I am studying a Bachelor of Health Science, Myotherapy, at Endeavour College. I've always been a proud member of our Association and this organisation has also grown and developed to better suit the needs of therapists. Over the years, at various regional meetings, I would hear calls for better regulation and recognition of our services directed at the Association. The development of the Certification Program by

the Association is a way that therapists like me can be recognised for professionalism and quality standards.

Certification enables us to differentiate ourselves from the competition. Poor practices such as people purporting to have qualifications they don't actually hold, misusing provider numbers, sham contracting and lack of clinical notes by fellow industry operators, can cast a shadow over those of us doing the right thing.

If you are a professional therapist like me, who cares for your customers' safety and service delivery, your employees' wellbeing and rights and the professional progression of our industry, I urge you to commit to becoming certified.'

Charlotte Keane, Advanced Diploma of Remedial Massage (Myotherapy), Certificated Specialist.