

New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (Inc.)
Te Kahui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Korero o Aotearoa

Affiliated to the International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatrics

15th September 2008

Hon. David Cunliffe
Minister of Health
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister

Re: Regulation of speech-language therapy under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act.

I am writing to express further concern over the period of time taken to consider the regulation of the profession of speech-language therapy under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act. Stella Ward, Immediate Past-President of the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association has previously expressed concern to staff within the Ministry of Health regarding this matter. Ms Ward was assured that our application would be reviewed in a timely manner and would not be affected by the current review of the HPCA Act.

The application to regulate speech-language therapy under the Act has now been with the Ministry of Health for two years and eight months. We are concerned about the delay and the effect this is having on the profession, our members and the public. It is of further concern that our application now appears to be on hold while the review of the Act is being completed. I have provided a timeline below regarding our submission.

January 2006: Application for the registration of speech-language therapy under the Act submitted to the Ministry of Health.

26 September 2006: Application for registration resubmitted following loss of original documents by the Ministry of Health.

20 December 2006: Letter from Ms Ward to Ryan McLean, Sector Policy, Ministry of Health, requesting an updated application timeline.

15 May 2007: Letter from Ms Ward to the Hon. Pete Hodgson, Minister of Health, expressing concern over the delays and providing further information on the potential for harm from inadequate or improper speech-language techniques.



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30 May 2007: Reply received from Ms Sandra Cumming, Analyst, Workforce Sector Policy Directorate, requesting further information regarding potential harm in speech-language therapy practice. Ms Cumming also stated that the application from speech-language therapy was being actively reviewed.

6 July 2007: Letter from Ms Ward to Ms Cumming providing a detailed response to her request for further information on the medical aspects of speech-language therapy. Supplementary details were also provided on the scope of practice for the profession and highlighting New Zealand's status as the only English-speaking nation in the world that does not regulate speech-language therapy.

16 August 2007: Email from Ms Cumming to the New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association providing the draft consultation document for perusal prior to public release.


10 September 2007 – 3 December 2007: Ministry of Health consultation period.

September 2007 – to May 2008: The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association was informed that a review of the Act may have an effect on the structure of regulatory bodies and that the review is intended to be completed by the end of 2008, at which time a decision will be made on the application by speech-language therapy for regulation.

8 May 2008: Correspondence received from Dr John Marwick apologising for the delay and stating that the Ministry of Health would endeavour to provide advice to the Minister on the need to regulate speech-language therapy as soon as possible after the completion of the review.

The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association has previously been assured that regulation of the profession would not be delayed by the review of the HPCA Act. However, given the significant delays in our application and recent correspondence from Dr Marwick, it would appear that this is the intent of the Ministry. I would appreciate your attention to this matter and clarification of our current position.

Yours sincerely



Dr Megan McAuliffe

President

New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association

cc. Mr Stephen McKernan, Director General of Health, Ministry of Health, PO Box 5013, Wellington.
cc. Dr John Marwick, Manager (Workforce), Health & Disability Systems Strategy Directorate, Ministry of Health, PO Box 5013, Wellington.
cc. Ms Stella Ward, Immediate Past-President, New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association.