Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists

The Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists is currently being developed through an ongoing collaboration between the three Practitioner Professional Bodies (PPBs); Audiology Australia, the Australian College of Audiology (ACAud) and the Hearing Aid Audiometrist Society of Australia (HAASA).

The Scope of Practice Project Group (the Project Group) has been established to facilitate the development of the Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists. The Project Group consists of two members from each of the three PPBs.

The Scope of Practice for audiologists and audiometrists aims to provide an easily accessible overview of the services that may be offered by appropriately qualified and experienced audiologists and audiometrists in Australia. The Scope of Practice will advocate for audiologists and audiometrists by:

- Acting as an educational tool for clients and their families, members of the general public, and other health care professionals;
- Providing information to assist policy makers concerned with regulation, legislation and third party reimbursement; and
- Being a resource to current and potential members of Audiology Australia, ACAud and HAASA who wish to gain an overview of the services they may be expected to be able to safely and independently provide in clinical practice, dependent on their qualifications and clinical experience.

The Scope of Practice aims to provide an overview of all services that may be provided by audiologists and audiometrists in Australia. It is not intended to be applied to individual audiologists or audiometrists. The Scope of Practice will not:

- Provide an assurance that an individual audiologist or audiometrist has the appropriate educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience to practice lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets professional standards, and does not pose any danger to the public or to themselves;
- Be able to be used to restrict or determine an individual audiologist’s or audiometrist’s scope of practice; or
- Be able to be used to discipline an individual audiologist or audiometrist for providing services that they do not have the educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience to practice lawfully, safely and effectively.

These regulatory aims are instead achieved via a suite of other relevant policies and by-laws that Audiology Australia, ACAud and HAASA members must adhere to. These include those outlining requirements regarding membership, internships, clinical certification, recognition of specific competencies, professional development, and recency and resumption of practice.
Additionally, a new Code of Conduct for members of Audiology Australia, ACAud and HAASA is in the final stages of consideration by the three PPBs, and is planned to be enacted on the 1st of July 2016. When enacted, the Code of Conduct will provide an additional tool in the suite of regulatory documents described above. In Standard 1.2f in the Code of Conduct, it is stated that members must be aware of, and only engage in, the area or areas of their profession that they have the appropriate educational qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience to practice lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets professional standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to themselves.

Furthermore, the three PPBs’ continuing work with developing and improving the higher education programmes also contributes to ensuring that audiologists and audiometrists have the knowledge, skills and experience required to practice lawfully, safely and effectively. This work includes, the continuing work of:

- Audiology Australia in reviewing and accrediting Master’s degrees in audiology,
- ACAud in the development and implementation of the Bachelor of Audimetry at the University of New England, and
- ACAud and HAASA in contributing to the development and review of TAFE Diplomas and Certificates in audiometry.

In summary, the Scope of Practice aims to advocate for audiologists and audiometrists by providing an overview of the services they may offer in Australia. The Scope of Practice will not be able to be used to define, regulate or restrict individuals’ scope of practice. These regulatory aims are instead achieved via a suite of other relevant policies and by-laws that Audiology Australia, ACAud and HAASA members must adhere to.