



Association for
Behaviour Analysis Australia
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ABA Australia Position Statement on National Regulation

www.auaba.com.au

Introduction

The Association for Behaviour Analysis Australia (ABA Australia) was founded in 2012 and memberships opened in January 2014. ABA Australia is a professional organisation that looks to support the development and advancement of the field of behaviour analysis in Australia. ABA Australia is dedicated to promoting the theoretical, experimental, and applied analysis of behaviour across a broad range of applications within Australia.

Our Objectives

- Represent Australia within the international behaviour analytic community
- Empower clinicians to use evidence-based practices
- Improve public, government, and industry understanding of behaviour analysis and its importance to society
- Increase the knowledge and skills of professionals working in the field of behaviour analysis through courses, conferences, and workshops
- Provide a forum for the interchange of ideas and knowledge among people involved in the field of behaviour analysis
- Encourage basic and applied research into behaviour analysis that will advance the knowledge base within Australia
- Promote BACB certification across ABA practitioners

While ABA Australia has continuously worked hard towards achieving all of these objectives, the promotion of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) certifications to ABA practitioners has always been a main focus. On 30 December 2019, the BACB (USA-based) announced that it will stop certifying international certificants in 2023 (BACB, 2019). Meaning that from 2023 onward the BACB examinations would no longer be available in Australia. This would severely limit the growth of professionals who have received specific training and supervision in the use of ABA in Australia. However, the BACB is allowing national behaviour analysis organisations to request that certification continue in their countries past 2023. ABA Australia has already applied and is waiting to hear the outcome of this request. This shift in certification procedures, coupled with the growing number of professionals within ABA in Australia, has made regulation of the field of behaviour analysis and protection of the title *behaviour analyst* a top priority for ABA Australia.

Need for National Regulation

There have been many challenges in advancing the field of ABA due to it being unregulated in Australia. This has led to a lack of understanding about what our profession is and in protecting the title of "behaviour analyst." The development and application of a professional

regulation of ABA in Australia would provide many benefits and safeguards in the development of our profession. We believe national regulation would:

- Provide protection to the public from harm.
- Create an entry-level standard of practice for behaviour analysts.
- Allow for a code of ethics to be followed and a complaints system to be implemented.
- Set standards for continued professional development.
- Allow for a single application process that facilitates practice from anywhere in Australia.
 - (Allied Health Professionals Australia, 2012)

National Regulation Models

ABA Australia set up a working group to identify different models of regulation. After researching various options, the following two models were presented to the board. These models represent ways that we can promote professionalism, maintain our strong alliance with science, and provide protection for consumers and practitioners of services provided by a behaviour analyst.

Model One - Regulation by the National Health Practitioner Regulation National Law

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) regulates health professionals to ensure they have the training and qualification to practice in an ethical manner and allows them to practice in any state or territory (Council of Australian Governments Health Council, 2017). The purpose of this scheme is to allow health practitioners to have a single registration recognised throughout Australia that oversees conduct issues and protection of the title of the professions (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency [AHPRA], 2015). Specifically, AHPRA ensures the health practitioners registered under this scheme are regulated in order to protect the public from harm (AHPRA, 2015).

The National Scheme and the National Law for health professions started in July 2010 and included 10 professions. As of May 2020, there are 15 health professions under the National Scheme (AHPRA, 2020).

Is this right for ABA Australia?

ABA Australia does not feel that we are currently suited to pursue this path. This model requires that legislation is passed in each state and territory as well as at the federal level. ABA Australia does not have the resources to devote to the time and cost it would take to accomplish this.

Additionally, at least 20 other health professions have applied to be included in the National Scheme and been unsuccessful. These include many well established professions in Australia such as audiologists, dieticians, and speech pathologists (Allied Health Professionals Australia, 2012). ABA Australia feels it is unlikely at this time that we would be successful in achieving recognition under the National Scheme.

Model Two - Professional Self-Regulation

While there is no universal definition of self-regulation, it can best be described as professionals within an industry developing, overseeing and monitoring compliance of professional standards and a code of ethics (Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council, 2013; Healy, 2006). Within a self-regulation model, government legislation is not needed (Commonwealth of Australia, Treasury, 2000).

The National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions (NASRHP) is a national body representing self-regulating health professionals in Australia. NASRHP's purpose is to represent the interests of health professionals and promote consistency of regulatory standards among professionals who use a self-regulation model (NASRHP, 2016). In Australia, a number of allied health professionals are part of NASRHP such as audiologists, speech pathologists, social workers, and dieticians (NASRHP, 2017).

Is this right for ABA Australia?

There are a number of attractive benefits to becoming a self-regulated profession. First, we can set our own standards of practice for what knowledge, skills, and experience are required for behaviour analysts to practice in a safe and effective manner (NASRHP, 2016). Second, we can develop a code of ethics and a complaint procedure that fits our values. Third, we have more control over these processes as there are less government regulations and procedures which allows for a more cost effective business model. These benefits lead to a more transparent profession that allows for increased consumer confidence.

The main limitation of this model is that it is voluntary, so not all professionals in the field may opt to join in. For professionals who choose not to participate there is no way to ensure public safety of their practice (Allied Health Professionals Australia, 2012).

ABA Australia will be pursuing professional self-regulation to achieve national regulation as we believe it fits the needs of behaviour analysts in Australia and promotes a healthy industry with standards that will protect the public and professionals.

Next Steps

ABA Australia will set up the infrastructure to monitor the profession of behaviour analysis within Australia. Self-regulation indicates that ABA practitioners are making a commitment to agree to self-regulation. Each level of membership will be based on a set of criteria and the member must show proof of meeting these requirements. These criteria will include attaining a certain level of education qualifications, and committing to ethical practices and a practice of standards.

What can I do?

ABA Australia will be reaching out to its members and the public for input throughout this process.

- If you have the time, consider volunteering as a member of the working group ([click here to fill out the expression of interest](#)).
- Please share this information with your network to spread the word about this project.
- If you want to receive updates about this project and other related ABA Australia information consider joining our mailing list ([click here to join to the mailing list](#)).
- If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us via email (admin@auaba.com.au).

We encourage all behaviour analysts in Australia to support this change and join the voluntary registration once it is established. We will provide more detailed information on our website in the coming months on how to register.

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