

Tuesday 29 August 2017

Massage & Myotherapy Australia has launched the first ever, national education campaign to help health consumers find professional massage therapists and myotherapists in their local communities.

The following provides supporting information as reference material for journalists.

## *1 Who is Massage & Myotherapy Australia (the Association)?*

Massage & Myotherapy Australia is the trading brand of the Australian Association of Massage Therapists Limited (AAMT). Formed in 2003, this leading not-for-profit association has a national membership of over 8,600 professionally qualified practitioners.

Massage & Myotherapy Australia encourages a high standard of practice, promotes the profession of Massage, Remedial Massage and Myotherapy, provides rules of conduct, ethics and standards, and provides input into the quality and delivery of training in Australia.

The Association's commitment to protecting the public and serving members has led the association and its membership to high levels of recognition in the industry and health sector.

## *2 What is the campaign about?*

The campaign slogan and title is '*Find a Professional Therapist*'. The campaign seeks to help people understand more about the application of professional massage therapy and myotherapy, and how to find appropriately qualified therapists.

## *3 What is the goal of the campaign?*

The campaign is needed to ensure that people who need help can trust in the professionalism of their massage or myotherapist and to help medical professionals and allied health providers have informed advice available to their patients when referring and discussing massage and myotherapy services.

A study by Wardle et al., 2013 found that Australian GPs regularly refer patients to a massage therapist with Australian qualifications occasionally to weekly.

## *4 What is it asking people to do?*

The campaign is supported by an online directory where people can find a local professional provider.

People are directed to a national massage directory at [www.massagemyotherapy.com.au](http://www.massagemyotherapy.com.au) where they can search a list of 8,600 plus professional massage therapists and myotherapists to find providers located in their local communities.

## *5 Is there supporting information?*

Yes. Educational information for consumers includes an explanation about the various modalities and techniques used in massage and myotherapy, and their applicable pain and stress conditions.

The information also outlines adjunct or complementary services such as aromatherapy and cupping, which therapists might use to enhance the client experience.

## *6 Who uses massage and myotherapy services?*

According to the Association's 2012 member survey, female patients outnumber males by a 2:1 ratio, and 95% of respondents' patients were between 18 and 65 years of age.

## *7 Why has the Association created the public education campaign?*

Having grown by a rate of 62.3% over the past 10 years in Australia<sup>i</sup>, there is a need to inform consumers about how to access qualified and suitably-skilled massage therapists and myotherapists locally.

The rapid growth in the sector and the appearance of many pseudo massage shops and services being offered by untrained therapists who are not members or registered with a professional association muddies what constitutes professional massage services.

Media coverage around sexual services associated with massage shops has added to the problem and confusion about massage and qualified massage and myotherapists.

## 8 How often do people access massage myotherapy?

In response to the 2012 AAMT practitioner survey, therapists reported providing treatment to alleviate pain and stress for the following conditions, and the number of sessions required:

Condition	Number of Sessions	
	Average	Median
Diabetes Effects Management	10	6
Addictions Rehabilitation Support	10	6
Cancer Treatment Issues	9	5
Other Chronic Conditions	9	5
Health and Wellness	9	5
Motor Vehicle Accident and Rehabilitation	8	6
Psychological Distress	8	6
Joint Pain and Stiffness, including Arthritis	8	5
Back Pain and/or Other Back Problems	6	4
Repetitive Strain Injury Syndromes	6	5
Neck/Shoulder Pain	5	4
Other Acute Injury or Pain Conditions	5	4
Sports Injury Management and Rehabilitation	4	4
Headaches or Migraines	4	3

## 9 How long will the campaign run?

The campaign will run for 12 months, from August 2017 to July 2018.

## 10 Where will the campaign be run?

The campaign commences in late August 2017 with radio and digital media advertising, and includes TV advertorial, social media advertising alongside educational social media activities.

## 11 Why do people use massage or myotherapy as part of their healthcare?

As one of the most often-used complementary health services, Australians access massage therapy<sup>ii</sup> and myotherapy every day for the treatment of symptoms arising from a variety of conditions.

Professional massage and myotherapy practices are recognised for their benefits in relieving pain and stress, and musculoskeletal conditions. The Association's 2012 member survey found that:

- Western Massage Therapy is the one used by the largest number of the Associations' members.
- If all massage therapies are counted, 50% of respondents use some form of massage as their first, second or third most frequently used therapy.
- Massage Therapy is provided significantly more frequently to younger patients for Occupational Overuse Syndrome; older patients were seen significantly more often for arthritis, cancer, health and wellness, other chronic reduced function and psychological distress including anxiety or depression.<sup>i</sup>

### *12 How can people be sure of the therapists listed in the directory?*

All therapists listed in the massage directory are members, subject to meeting a professional standard and code of conduct, qualifications, and oversight by the National Ethics Committee where complaints are actively monitored, actioned and followed up with authorities where necessary.

### *13 Is there more information available on the types of issues raised by consumers?*

Yes. The *Code of Ethics Report 2012-2015—'Our problem—Our solution'* by Massage and Myotherapy Australia, presents complaints data against the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) categories. It is available for download on the Association's website.

Formal and informal complaints about member and non-member therapists between 2012 and 2015 increased by 49% (informal complaints are those complaints that do not proceed to investigation), highlighting the need for public education and tighter scrutiny by consumers and authorities of massage and myotherapists operating in this self-regulating sector.

### *14 Is the education campaign a standalone initiative?*

The *Find a Professional Therapist* public education campaign is part of a wider quality assurance program to ensure consumers understand, access and make informed choices about using professional and qualified therapists.

Available in 2018, to all therapists who can meet Certification standards, a third party approved Certification Program, currently in trial, will be introduced.

Certification aims to further reassure health consumers and referring health practitioners that Certified therapists are credible members of a professional body that acts with integrity.

### *15 Are examples of the campaign ads available?*

Yes, the radio ads will be posted on the Association's website. Artwork for printed/digital ads is also available on request.

### *16 Are media spokespeople available for interview?*

Yes. To arrange an interview please contact: Glenn Schaub 0439 320 151; glenns@grscom.com.au

Listen to the [radio ads](#);

View the [static ads](#);

Visit the [massage directory](#)

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<sup>i</sup> <http://joboutlook.gov.au/occupation.aspx?search=alpha&tab=prospects&cluster=&code=4116>

<sup>ii</sup> Leach MJ, 'Profile of the complementary and alternative medicine workforce across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States and United Kingdom', *Complement Ther Med*. 2013 Aug;21(4):364-78. doi: 0.1016/j.ctim.2013.04.004. Epub 2013 May 23