

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AUSTRALIA LIMITED ACN 127 396 945 (COMPANY)

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

How is OTA addressing the issue of preferential treatment of physiotherapists by the NDIS?

OTA is on the record as strenuously opposing different rates being paid to different allied health professions working in the NDIS. Unfortunately, psychologists continue to command a higher hourly rate than other allied health professionals and, since 2018, so too do physiotherapists working in some parts of the country.

We have raised this matter as one of the highest importance in our last two submissions to the NDIS Annual Price Review, and in other relevant submissions.

However, reasons for the NDIA's preferential treatment of physiotherapists have been identified. The NDIA pricing schedule is, and will likely continue to be, influenced by market forces. The NDIA is paying physiotherapists more than OTs in certain parts of the country because, outside of the NDIS, those physiotherapists command a higher hourly rate than other allied health professionals.

This is most probably because physiotherapists have access to an entire market segment that occupational therapists, for example, do not; namely, those who have injured themselves slightly but who are otherwise perfectly abled and fit.

So, physiotherapists frustrated by the NDIA's bureaucratic excesses can walk away from disabled work and be paid more by injured sportspeople. It follows that the NDIA has to raise the fee paid to physiotherapists in order to attract them to, and retain them in, the disability sector. At this point in time, occupational therapists have no such leverage.

While we will continue to lobby the NDIA and monitor pricing as best we can, the NDIA had already set a precedent by paying psychologists more than the other professions from day one of the scheme. And the new, preferential treatment of physiotherapists working in certain parts of the country indicates the NDIA's decision making will continue to be influenced by the realities of the marketplace.

OTA will continue to oppose the preferential treatment of particular allied health professions. However, given the increasing demand for occupational therapy, particularly as our population ages, if the NDIA persists with preferential treatment of the allied health professions, it may well have to consider paying OTs more in order to keep them within the scheme.