Occupation Summary: Australian Orthotist/Prosthetists

**Key Purpose:** The role of the orthotist/prosthetist is to promote quality of life through a client centred approach to the provision of orthotic and prosthetic treatment.

**Description:** Orthotist/Prosthetists assess the physical and functional limitations of people resulting from illnesses and disabilities, including limb amputations, and provide orthoses and prostheses to restore function or compensate for muscular and skeletal disabilities.

**Tasks of the occupation include:**

- assessing clients' emotional, psychological, developmental and physical capabilities using clinical observations, evidence based assessment techniques and outcome measures
- designing, prescribing and fitting orthoses and prostheses with the client to meet their personal and treatment goals
- undertaking and/or co-ordinating the safe manufacture of orthoses and prostheses
- continually evaluates the fit, function, quality and safety of orthoses/prostheses and modifies as required to ensure a client’s personal and functional outcomes in relation to established treatment goals
- working with other Health Professionals to enhance collaborative practice to improve client access to care via coordinated team reports, care plans and service improvement activities
- working with external bodies to provide specialist advice to specific client groups such as those requiring third-party compensation and medico-legal representation
- recording clients' progress and maintaining professional relationships in accordance with relevant legislative requirements and ethical guidelines
- maintaining and extending professional competence to ensure new techniques, technology and evidence are integrated into practice

**Entry level qualification to practice in Australia:**

An Australian Qualification Framework Level 7 qualification (Bachelor Degree) is required for entry to this occupation in Australia. This is reflected in public sector awards and the AOPA membership eligibility criteria. The only Bachelor Degree accepted for entry into the profession is a Bachelor in Prosthetics and Orthotics. A generalist health degree or alternative allied health qualification does not allow entry into the occupation. The current minimum tertiary education
available in this profession in Australia is a Master in Clinical Prosthetics and Orthotics through La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Orthotics and prosthetics is a self-regulated profession. The AOPA membership accounts for 70% of the profession nationally. Whilst registration or licensing is not mandated, some funding body guidelines restrict the provision of funded services to those with AOPA membership. Further to this, public sector employment is increasingly restricted to those practitioners who can demonstrate membership eligibility to the AOPA.

Further requirements:

Ongoing AOPA membership is restricted to practitioners who adhere to the mandatory, annual Continuing Professional Development program requirements, scope of practice and code of ethics for the profession. The AOPA requires all members to demonstrate knowledge currency and adherence to the 2014 competency standards.

Definitions:

Orthosis (pl. Orthoses).
An externally applied device used to modify the structural or functional characteristics of the neuro-muscularskeletal systems. Orthoses may be Prefabricated, Customised or Custom Made (International Organisation for Standards, 1989). An orthosis is the true term for a brace or appliance that is designed and fitted external to the body in order to achieve one or more of the following goals: control or alter biomechanical alignment, protect and support a healing injury, assist rehabilitation, reduce pain, increase mobility, increase independence.

Prosthesis (pl. Prostheses).
An externally applied device used to replace wholly, or in part, an absent or deficient limb segment” (International Organisation for Standards, 1989).

Prosthetist (pron: Prosthe-tist).
An allied health professional who is clinically responsible for the assessment, prescription, design, manufacture and fitting of all types of prostheses to patients (International Organisation for Standards, 1989).

Orthotist (pron: Ortho-tist).
An allied health professional who is clinically responsible for the assessment, prescription, design, manufacture and fitting of all types of orthoses to patients (International Organisation for Standards, 1989).