

31 August 2014

Dear Hospital Executive,

I am writing on behalf of the Australian Association of Hospital Play Specialists (AAHPS). Some changes are happening in our profession. You may have workers under the titles of Play Therapist, Educational Play Therapist, Hospital Play specialist, Play Coordinator etc who will be affected by these changes, in particular our decision to change to the professional title of **Child Life Therapist**.

What are the changes?

1. Change in professional title. What has been known as the Australian Association of Hospital Play Specialists (AAHPS), as of November 2014 will change to the **Association of Child Life Therapy Australia (ACLTA)** - with the professional title of **Child Life Therapist**
2. National guidelines to provide consistency in service. Including recommendations for:
 - Minimum qualifications for newly recruited Child Life Therapists
 - Competency-based training to be completed in the workplace
 - Scope of practice for assistant, therapist, and senior therapist level

Why are we making changes?

It is now well researched and recognised that the medium of play is a critical tool to enable children and families gain a deeper understanding of their treatment, and develop coping strategies to be active participants in their care. In June this year AAHPS, with the support of Camp Quality, held a National Strategic Forum. Of concern to us was the inconsistency in role, title and training. By setting national recommendations we aim to ensure the delivery of consistent quality care that reflects our professional values. The concept of hospital play has, and continues to evolve. We need to ensure that we too are evolving in line with best practice.

There are many titles to describe this role across Australia, leading to confusion and difficulty in evolving our profession. 'Child Life' is the professional title used throughout USA, Canada, and many other countries. It is internationally recognised and associated with the growing body of evidence demonstrating the efficacy and benefits of therapeutic play and psychological preparation. By aligning with this professional title we recognise the full scope of the work of a Child Life Therapist in Australia, and acknowledge that our work has a solid grounding in evidence-based practice. It demonstrates to others that the work we do is similar to our international colleagues, and provides us with the opportunity to strengthen our identity as professionals in the health care environment.

Association members elected to make these changes following much consultation and discussion. At AAHPS we are strongly committed to the work that we do. As such we will be supporting members to make this change. We are encouraging practitioners across all Australian sites to change their title with us, as soon as practicable, in order to unify nationally. We are happy to provide more information and invite you to contact us for discussion should you require. We would appreciate if you could circulate this information to those relevant in your network. Please join us in supporting your Child Life Therapists and celebrating this exciting change for our profession in November 2014.

Yours Sincerely,



Michelle Perrin
AAHPS Chairperson
On behalf of AAHPS
T: 02 4985 5174
E: emailaaahps@gmail.com