

# *‘It’s not the battles we lose that bother me, it’s the ones we don’t suit up for’*

Toby, in ‘*The West Wing*’, cited by Janet Albrechtsen, Columnist, ‘*The Australian*’, 27 September 2023

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Phillip Ebrall

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**Narrative:** In August 2023 RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia) announced it would cease delivering a program of chiropractic education. The program commenced in 1975 and was the first in the world to be funded by a National government. Today it is officially being ‘taught out’ and will cease to be in just 4 years.

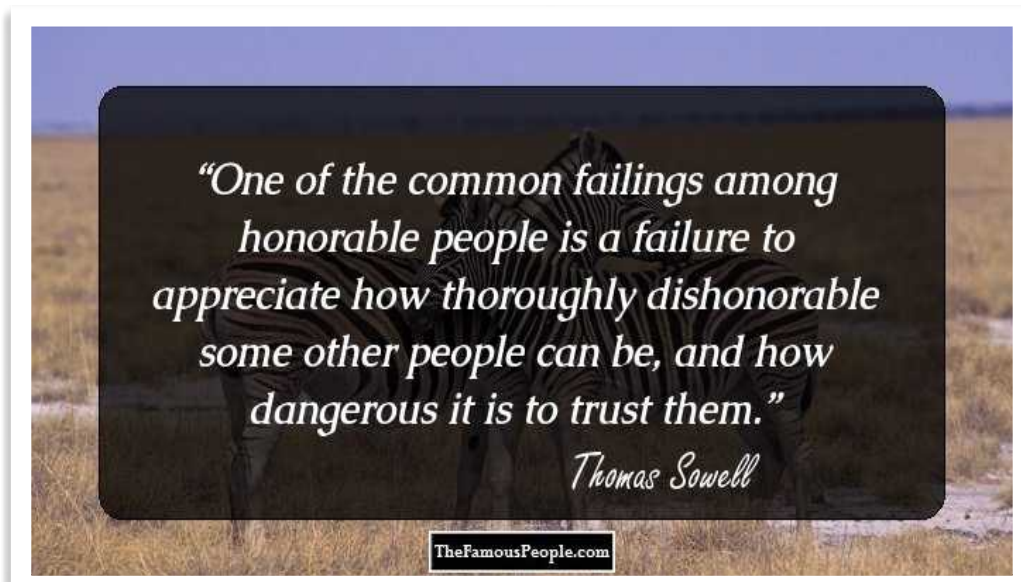
As irresponsible as this decision may seem from a Chiropractor’s perspective, it remains RMIT’s right to determine which programs it delivers and those which it does not. The lesson the profession must learn is that state-funded universities can not be expected to reflect the passion that their education creates in its graduates, especially Chiropractors.

In past papers I have made this comment and now formalise and index it: ‘*Australia’s publicly-funded institutions of higher education have no redeeming qualities to warrant them holding custody of a program of Chiropractic education*’; they most certainly do not and can not replicate the integrity of a purpose-focussed private college nor match the integrity and academic commitment evident in many non-Australian universities throughout East Asia which are guided by a strong social conscience.

The usual claim is that a university with multiple disciplines provides cross-fertilisation of ideas and high levels of teaching quality from discipline experts in other fields, but in Australia this can not really be claimed to have been found true. There is also a claim that within a university Chiropractic academics will hone their scholarship, write, and publish; we know this is laughable.

RMIT has been far from exceptional for Chiropractic education for most of its 30 or so years as a university created by one political party’s agenda. It is healthy for the profession to now be forced into examining new models of education to better serve the profession and create a stronger professional identity.

**Indexing terms:** Chiropractic; accreditation; RMIT; education; Professional Identity; Future planning.



## Editorial

Much has happened since my Editorial of 10 August 2023, while during the same period nothing has happened. The 'nothing' refers to RMIT's insolent corporate behaviour in ignoring the reasonable voices of the profession.

In this Editorial I will do my best to focus on the big picture and the lessons the profession must learn from this event. I also state my position that 'Australia's publicly-funded institutions of higher education have no redeeming qualities to warrant them holding custody of a program of Chiropractic education'. I have reached this view from reflecting on the lessons learned as I worked to manage more new programs of Chiropractic education than most others I know, and in 5 countries including Australia. I hold a strongly positive view of a number of universities off-shore which are guided by a strong social conscience and a true spirit of academic freedom. Indeed, their 'university model' is far superior to that of Australia.

The more sobering observation is that three of those programs are now closed (Hanseo University), are closing (RMIT University), and with one closed last year under my active management (Tokyo College). Closing a program is a painful process and I have empathy with the Chiropractic team at RMIT, they really need our support at this time.

A side-note is that Tokyo's closure was a downstream effect of RMIT's decision to abandon its relationship with the College. However when all is said and done, in global terms there have been more chiropractic programs started and closed, than started and still operating. Weiss and Callender (1) identify about 250 (2) such institutions over 110 years, yet today we only have almost 50 active colleges or programs globally. (3)

In Australia alone there have been, at my best guess, about 12 to 15 'programs' over time, of which there are now four, as 3 in government funded universities (*Macquarie, Murdoch, CQU*) each without an assured future, and one in a private institution (*Australian Chiropractic College*), with a future that is not yet assured but which could become great as a national institution. It needs the right management, vision, and our professional support.

### Does RMIT deserve to retain Chiropractic education?

As a legitimate and regulated discipline of the health sciences, Chiropractic is better and bigger than the *Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*, a trade-school which never really became a university in the full sense of a university being a place where intellectual freedom finds a natural home. The concept of RMIT as a university is flawed, it's public-facing facade appears to be a rabble of disconnected special-interest groups, one of which, the *RMIT Fact Checking Unit*, cannot even maintain its registration. In site of being paid AUS\$165,000 a year (4) by Australia's national broadcaster, the *Australian Broadcasting Commission*, the 'RMIT ABC Fact Check' and 'RMIT FactLab' departments may not have maintained current International Fact-Checking Network certification. (4)

... It is time for our beloved and treasured profession, which does so much good in Australian communities, to move on from RMIT's bastardry and chart its own course outside the sphere of capricious political and medical influence....'



1. Wiese G, Callender AC. How many Chiropractic schools? An update. *Chiropr Hist*. 2007;27(2):89-119.
2. Wiese & Callender's raw count of institutions is about 593, and they reduced this to about 250 by considering 'name changes, merges and acquisitions, and satellite schools'.
3. Stochkendahl MJ, Reza M, Torres P, et al. The chiropractic workforce: a global review. *Chiropr Man Therap*. 2019;27, 36. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12998-019-0255-x>.
4. Elsworth S. ABC has paid RMIT ABC Fact Check unit over \$670,000 since it started in 2020. *The Australian Business Review*. 24 September 2023. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/abc-has-paid-rmit-abc-fact-check-unit-over-670000-since-it-started-in-2020/news-story/5a1a6d04e0aa075e228ab2953ea8118c>.

Questions regarding foreign influence (5) on RMIT's ABC Fact Checking Unit were raised in Australia's national parliament, (6) and even Zuckerberg's Meta promised to end its relationship with the Fact Checking Unit due to its left wing bias, (7) which is really saying something.

RMIT's bias was widely noted by the media. (8) Perhaps the most concerning allegation relates to the people who were employed by RMIT management as honest 'fact-checkers'; it seems they may not have held appropriate qualifications. (9)

#### *What has this to do with Chiropractic?*

It is an overt symptom that *'the humanist university decomposed, in the first place, slowly from within'*. (10) Carroll explains that Australian universities in particular suffer from *'the new spectre of managerialism. As professors lost confidence in what they were professing, they were replaced by managers as the key figures in the institution. The teachers came to serve the administrators, not the other way around'*.

One example of this with RMIT is that when managers wanted to save space for the relocation of Chiropractic teaching activities on the Bundoora campus they got rid of a large volume of equipment donated by Australian Gonstead practitioners; this included valuable *Nervoscopes* as well as a range of knee-chest tables, benches, and Gonstead Chairs. These, along with other donated equipment, were junked with no reparation to the donors. I have already noted (11) that no funds were returned to either the Chiropractic teaching group nor the profession which paid for and donated for example the *Bulleen Clinic*.

A profession can stand only so much overt contempt towards it, and the answer to my question *'Does RMIT deserve to retain Chiropractic education?'* has to be no. The image here is a view from happier times. Looking South it shows the new buildings of the *Preston Institute of Technology* at the time they were opened around 1975. (12)



The Chiropractic program, under the leadership of Andries Kleynhans, moved to this campus in the late 1970s, being housed in the John R Siddon's building (tower block on the right). These assets were transferred to RMIT on it being legislated as a university.

5. Houghton J. Ed. Business Media. THE FACT CHECK FILES: Inside the secretive and lucrative fact checking industry behind a foreign-funded bid to censor Voice debate. Sky News. 23 August 2023. <https://www.skynews.com.au/business/media/the-fact-check-files-inside-the-secretive-and-lucrative-fact-checking-industry-behind-a-foreignfunded-bid-to-censor-voice-debate/news-story/31915e1eb03b029b86a2f03aac19338b>.
6. Roberts M. Government Ignores Foreign Influence in RMIT-ABC Fact Checks. YouTube. 4 September 2023. [https://youtu.be/r-8Hq5mNH\\_k?si=PJWLmMSZpi-ZB73V](https://youtu.be/r-8Hq5mNH_k?si=PJWLmMSZpi-ZB73V).
7. Paterson J, Senator. Meta ends partnership with "Left wing, activist" fact checkers. YouTube. 29 August 2023. [https://youtu.be/5pCCPNEdKII?si=FMEPH6vGIM3J\\_7si](https://youtu.be/5pCCPNEdKII?si=FMEPH6vGIM3J_7si).
8. Elsworth S. Meta ends partnership with RMIT FactLab amid voice referendum bias claims. The Australian Business Review. 29 August 2023. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/media/meta-ends-partnership-with-rmit-factlab-amid-voice-referendum-bias-claims/news-story/3237f2459b9dc28d2d74f185051ca60f>.
9. 'As if anyone was qualified': Douglas Murray on 'who fact checks the fact checkers'. Sky News Australia. 2 September 2023. [https://youtu.be/Mx0ZpTas8es?si=H4\\_vgT\\_BIC0QkUzz](https://youtu.be/Mx0ZpTas8es?si=H4_vgT_BIC0QkUzz).
10. Carroll J. The death of the humanities in our universities. Inquirer. The Australian. 22 July 2023. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/the-death-of-the-humanities-in-our-universities/news-story/adc86dee11a4dae64e35c886c1ddad59>.
11. Ebrall P. RMIT University kills its Chiropractic program in Victoria. Asia-Pac Chirop J. 2023;4.2. URL [apcj.net/Papers-issue-4-1/#EbrallRMIT](http://apcj.net/Papers-issue-4-1/#EbrallRMIT).
12. Building 201 (John R Siddons Building, RMIT. <https://www.rmit.edu.au/maps/melbourne-bundoora-campus/building-201>.

## Moving forward

Much energy and good-will can be wasted in trying to have RMIT reverse its decision. While I caution against this I take nothing away from the *Australian Chiropractors Association's* continuing efforts (13) which this Journal strongly supports, not only on behalf of members but also on behalf of future Australians who will benefit from locally-trained, competent and capable Chiropractors.

The profession needs to think seriously now about the massive hole left in RMIT's social contract by it removing the opportunity for regional, less-advantaged, and indigenous Australian youth to study for a career which brings benefits to their local communities on their return to practice. I understand that about one-third of RMIT's students were/are representing this important group of stakeholders. This sense of social commitment is deeply ingrained in the remaining senior academic staff responsible for teaching-out the Chiropractic program.

*This is a victory for political medicine*

The matter, as I interpret it, is that the *Friends of Science in Medicine* (FoSiM) have won this battle. On-going Freedom of Information requests will reveal 'who' and 'how' in the future but for now this Masthead will be publishing in our next issue (4.3, January 2024) some extracts from such documents already obtained by duly-diligent Chiropractors. It has been humbling for the *Journal* to have received so much material previously hidden from public scrutiny. It will be shared.

*Students are our priority - they are our future*

Given my position that no Australian university could be a good home for a new Chiropractic program, and given my fatalistic view of RMIT's management, the questions we must address are first about what we can do to support the students remaining at RMIT in a gutted program that has no incentive to retain Chiropractic teaching staff.

Plans are being put in place to offer remaining RMIT students some targeted seminars and many Chiropractors have come forward to donate their time and acquired wisdom. Regrettably there will be a notional fee for students to cover venue cost as RMIT has made it clear that seminars outside their curriculum are not welcome to use University facilities even though those facilities rightfully belong to Australian taxpayers.

The next task is to make strategic decisions for a private institution most likely in Victoria, but first we must address the profession's own issues which may have contributed to RMIT's decision.

## The two elephants in the room

There are two elephants in the room, namely the contribution of the *Chiropractic Board of Australia* (CBA) to RMIT's decision, and the complicity of the discipline's institutional and programmatic accrediting body, the *Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia* (CCEA). Neither has clean hands.

*Chiropractic Board of Australia*

The actions of CBA are unhealthy for Australian Chiropractors and their patients. Their continual refusal to address their politically motivated and supposedly interim policy '*The Board advises chiropractors to not use spinal manipulation to treat children under two years of age*', (14) dated 14 March 2019 has cost the profession an estimated AUD \$250 million in 'lost' patients. (15) Its purpose is clearly stated to be '*to protect the public until the outcomes of the expert review are known, and a final policy is developed on the issue*' [emphasis ours]. The review has been and gone and it could be seen as a dereliction of its duty for the Board to have not yet developed its final policy.

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13. Cahill D. President's Message. Australian Chiropractors Association. August 2023. From 3:45. <https://youtu.be/u9e2uqy77-4>.

14. Chiropractic Board of Australia. Codes and Guidelines. Current as 13:54 27 September 2023. <https://www.chiropracticboard.gov.au/Codes-guidelines/Position-statements/Interim-policy-on-spinal-manipulation.aspx>.

15. Information presented in a confidential meeting, September 2023, exploring legal options to recover damages to the practice of Chiropractic.

Sadly the CBA has damaged its authority and at best it seems reasonable to see them as having been spooked by political medicine to implement a meaningless policy without evidence in an attempt to appease the medical politics that were in play at the time.

The Board's tragic and costly inertia has created uncertainty around the teaching of paediatrics and infant care. This has been previously addressed (11) as it was a significant factor in Condition 3 which was imposed on the RMIT Chiropractic program by the CCEA:

► Condition 3: Chiropractic assessment, management and treatment of the paediatric patient

*By 31 October 2023, RMIT University is to demonstrate that students have sufficient chiropractic training to assess, manage and treat the paediatric patient within current evidence-based guidelines.*

The very least the CBA should have done is to issue a guidance for Chiropractic Educators, but even this seems to have been beyond their competence unless they hold an intent we are unaware of to damage the profession for political purposes. A noted critic of the Chiropractic discipline and its politics, Edzard Ernst, has stated (16) *'Considering the amount of highly public blunders they managed to inflict on the profession in recent years, I have come to the conclusion that the BCA [British Chiropractic Association] is a cover organisation of BIG PHARMA with the aim of giving chiropractic a bad name!'* This is nothing less than the perpetuation of the position of the *American Medical Association (AMA)* which became known as the *Iowa Plan* to contain and eliminate Chiropractors. (17) The *Iowa Plan* was publicly exposed in the *'The Wilk Trial'* which found the AMA guilty of attempts to contain the discipline, (18) however the plan continues in other countries including Australia. (19) It is up to us each individually to think about how this could be manifesting.

To complicate matters it seems there is a standoff in the form of a power-play between the CBA and CCEA which may in time lead to calls for accreditation services to be put to public tender. Similar calls are occurring in the USA (20) where there are parts of the profession challenging what they call the *'Chiropractic Cartel'*, a monopoly of vested interests detrimental to the quality of Chiropractic education. (21) These 'vested interests' include regulators and accreditors.

*Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia*

My earlier critical comments (11) of Condition 2 imposed by the CCEA on the RMIT Chiropractic program to the effect that:

*'By 30 April 2023, RMIT University must submit evidence to demonstrate that there is sufficient quality and quantity of in-person clinical experience for developing a student to be a graduate competent to practise. (This condition was deemed to be met in April 2023)'*

are better seen in light of the fact that the program's accreditation site inspection was originally scheduled in the midst of COVID shutdowns and was deferred for a short time to allow the University to recover towards normal teaching patterns.

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16. Ernst E. Is the BCA a cover organisation of BIG PHARMA for giving chiropractic a bad name? Edzard Ernst. 17 April 2017. URL <https://edzardernst.com/2017/04/is-the-bca-a-cover-organisation-of-big-pharma-for-giving-chiropractic-a-bad-name/>
  17. The Menace of Chiropractic. An outline of remarks made by Robert B. Throckmorton, Legal Counsel, Iowa Medical Society, at the North Central Medical Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota. November 11, 1962. Plaintiff exhibit 172 of 2 December 1975 coded 00131. Copy of document held in the collection of the author and available at [https://www.apcj.net/site\\_files/4725/upload\\_files/IowaPlan1962\(1\)\(1\).pdf?dl=1](https://www.apcj.net/site_files/4725/upload_files/IowaPlan1962(1)(1).pdf?dl=1).
  18. Johnson CD, Green BN. Looking back at the lawsuit that transformed the chiropractic profession part 4: Committee on Quackery. J Chiropr Educ. 2021;35(S1):55-73. A series of papers. <https://doi.org/10.7899/JCE-21-25>.
  19. Rome PL. Similarities between the chiropractic situation in Australia and the Iowa plan. Chiropr J Aust. 2017;45(1):53-62. <http://www.cjaonline.com.au/index.php/cja/article/view/139>.
  20. News. FCA Claims CCE is the "Gold Standard" as Justification for a Monopoly. The Chronicle of Chiropractic. 16 March 2023. <http://chiropractic.prosepoint.net/179979>.
  21. McCoy M. Disinformation, Censorship, Infringement on First Amendment Rights, and Infringement of Academic Freedom within the Chiropractic Profession. Proceedings. 18th International Research and Philosophy Symposium (IRAPS): Philosophical, Theoretical and Practical Considerations of Vertebral Subluxation Correction. Sherman College of Chiropractic Spartanburg, SC. May 4-6, 2023. In: A. Vertebral Subluxation Res. Volume 2023:88.

There is every reason to believe the leadership and staff of the Chiropractic program worked diligently under the duress of multiple lockdowns imposed by the Victorian Government and the university itself to ensure students would not be compromised with their clinical learning. The fact that the CCEA deemed *'This condition ... to be met in April 2023'* suggests that imposing this condition in the first place was arbitrary if not unfair and unreasonable.

This indicates a weakness in the processes of CCEA by using interstate accreditors to conduct site visits. It could be that in RMIT's case an interstate accreditor would not have the lived experience of Victorians nor have felt the very real and negative impact of trying to deliver a quality education in the world's most locked-down jurisdiction. In other words, they would not be capable of understanding RMIT's actions in a fair and reasonable manner.

Herein lies the fatal flaw of the CCEA's accreditation process: it is entirely subjective and at times actually asks the wrong questions. For example, the imposed condition that RMIT *'must submit evidence to demonstrate that students are represented within the deliberative and decision-making processes for the chiropractic program'* is complicated by semantics. In brief, and within the window of confidence afforded to me, the RMIT program has for several years addressed this matter at a granular level where students were more actively engaged in the teaching matters directly impacting them at the time, resulting in a speedier resolution of matters arising. My information is that it seems the individual accreditor judging this matter had a different view, one where student engagement is aggregated to be more distant or of a helicopter nature.

The basis for my views about weaknesses in accreditors is grounded in having been intimately involved in multiple accreditation visits over many years and at times leading a number of programs to and through the process and witnessing accreditor bias and prejudice first hand. I have not and would not ever attempt to judge the merit of another institution's program as an accreditor.

The CCEA claims to be addressing these issues (22) but seems to be doing so within an echo chamber of sycophants which is unlikely to make any substantive change for the better. There is no current indication on its website that a process is in place and the actual call is not retained as a *'News'* item, as are all similar calls.

### The bigger picture

University-based Chiropractic education in Australia is at an inflection point and each of the 3 remaining universities may stay the same or move in one of two directions:

- ▶ the worst case is that they too will diminish their programs if not close them, following RMIT's weak example or by submitting to intensified campaigns by FoSiM or preferably
- ▶ these 3 universities will put more effort and support into their programs of Chiropractic education and raise teaching in the discipline to a world-class level. They can only do this with overt and strong engagement by the ACA.

Before we collectively *'tut-tut'* at the worst case above I note that *CQUniversity* has ceased its delivery of its Chiropractic program in Sydney and is in the process of closing its Mackay campus; it's Melbourne campus was a brief experiment. I also recognise the Sydney program now at *Macquarie University* came perilously close to closure and was indeed *'for sale'* in recent years. There has also been chatter that the *Murdoch University* program was at one stage slated for closure.

### Credential inflation

A significant issue within Australian universities is the matter of *'Credential inflation'*. (23) Karmel and Mackenzie explain that *'Credential inflation is occurring as the level of qualification required to enter a particular occupation rises'*.

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22. Call for expressions of interest for the Accreditation and Competency Standards Steering Committee. CCEA. website March 2023. No longer visible.

23. Karmel T, Mackenzie B. Australia is in the grip of credential inflation. Higher Education. The Australian. 12 September 2023. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/australia-is-in-the-grip-of-credential-inflation/news-story/223fe82fa8a93222cf20656d4992b2dc>.

I raise this matter as it is known that at least one of the 3 university-based programs in Australia wants to rename its existing Masters program as a '*Doctor of Clinical Chiropractic*'. While I am an active proponent of non-Australian universities introducing programs to attain this level of qualification it must be said that those new programs are 6-years in duration and structured as a 3-year Bachelor, an accelerated 3-year Masters, and an accelerated 3-year Clinical Doctorate. This 6 calendar-year program totals over 8,500 learning hours and requires over 1,200 patient interactions across a spectrum of Case-mix, Demographics, and practice environments. This is followed by a supervised 6-month internship as Associate Practice.

It is difficult to envisage any existing Australian 5-year Bachelor/Master Chiropractic program currently meeting Level 9 outcomes of the *Australian Qualifications Framework* (AQF) being able to meet the significantly increased demands of the Level 10 criteria (Doctoral) within the existing program framework. A university can't simply say '*this program is now taught at Level 10*', the level which applies to doctorates, without providing evidence of the changes to reach that level. Of note is the need to '*develop new knowledge*' to achieve Doctoral-degree capability. (24)

AQF Addendum No. 2 states '*The use of the qualification title "Doctor of ..." is permitted for a Masters Degree (Extended) for five professions: medical practice; physiotherapy; dentistry; optometry and veterinary practice*'. (25) It is more academically sound to strengthen any existing Masters degree to meet the criteria which warrant classification as an '*Extended Masters*' and then seek approvals to include Chiropractic within the provision cited as Addendum No. 2.

#### *Which entry-level of education would best serve the profession?*

For anything to happen there needs to be a clear statement of the level of education required to enter the profession. Remember, Chiropractic education commenced in Australia as a 4½ year Bachelor with 6 months field placement. It then became a Double Bachelor, then a Bachelor/Master, all the while reducing taught hours and stripping content. The profession must decide whether it considers a single or a double-Bachelor is appropriate, or a Bachelor/Master is appropriate? Currently all formats are delivered in Australia and the decision must be made on the required entry-level capabilities, not the title of the academic award.

This is not a decision to be made by any university with its vested interests in increasing fee-income from students for a supposed '*clinical doctorate*'.

It is also not for Australia's *Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency* (TEQSA) to determine, rather TEQSA sets the *standards* for university programs to meet. TEQSA was established in 2011 for the purpose of '*regulating and assuring the quality of all providers of higher education in Australia*'.

Under the *National Law 2009* (26) the CBA will register an individual when that individual '*holds an approved qualification for the health profession*'. Under the *National Law* one cannot call themselves a chiropractor, claim to be a chiropractor or perform manipulation of the cervical spine if they are not registered. To apply for registration with the CBA one must hold '*an approved qualification*'.

The '*approved qualification*' is determined by CCEA which is '*responsible for accrediting education providers and programs of study for the chiropractic profession*'. The standards for determining whether or not a program is accredited are the responsibility of the CCEA. These standards (27) seem silent on what the program may actually be called.

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24. Australian Qualifications Framework. 2e. January 2013. <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2022C00105> and <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/how-we-regulate/acts-and-standards/australian-qualifications-framework> and <https://www.aqf.edu.au/framework/aqf-levels>.

25. Addendum No. 2 to AQF Second Edition January 2013 Amended Qualification Type:AQF Issuance Policy, Masters Degree (Extended). p. 2, point ii. <https://www.aqf.edu.au/download/421/addendum-no2-aqf-second-edition-january-2013-amended-qualification-type-aqf-issuance-policy-masters/15/addendum-no2-aqf-second-edition-january-2013-amended-qualification-type-aqf-issuance-policy-masters/pdf>.

26. Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009. Queensland. Current at 20 September 2023. <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/act-2009-045>.

27. Accreditation Standards for Chiropractic programs. Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia. 2017. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/619ad68aad4524745de58b0d/t/61b6adb53abfad17365d6888/1639361985090/CCEA\\_Accreditation\\_and\\_Compency\\_Standards\\_2017.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/619ad68aad4524745de58b0d/t/61b6adb53abfad17365d6888/1639361985090/CCEA_Accreditation_and_Compency_Standards_2017.pdf).

The CCEA standards are also silent on the Professional Identity (28) of Chiropractors, an embarrassing omission which must be addressed. The existing programmatic accreditation standards and the CCEA's entry-level competencies for Chiropractors are equally applicable to physiotherapists, and this means the Chiropractic profession can not really blame RMIT management for not discerning the difference and choosing to swap-out Chiropractic education for a program of physiotherapy education. The profession must exert its influence on CCEA to update its standards so they reflect contemporary expectations of who a Chiropractic is and what they do.

This is the way that any perceived weakness in graduates must be addressed, and I would argue that the CCEA standards have promoted wokeness over clinical and professional capabilities and that they have poor and outdated means to attempt to measure either.

But first it is the *Academic Board* of the university which holds responsibility to determine the nomenclature of the awards it offers and this is the level which must be lobbied. Of course it is expected that the ACA would be involved and it is to be hoped they would see merit in the 'doctor' terminology and support either a significant increase in the *Volume of Learning* to reach that standard, or seek TEQSA recognition for the academic title '*Doctor of Clinical Chiropractic*' on completion of an extended Masters.

A name-change without increased clinical capabilities will not 'cut it' and I do not have the confidence to leave these decisions to the CCEA.

### The enduring issues

Australians like to think their approach to the profession of Chiropractic is world-leading, which is today a fantasy.

The Chair of the *International Chiropractic Regulatory Society* is Wayne Minter (29) who is Chair of the CBA. The Vice President of the '*Councils on Chiropractic Education International (CCEI) ... established in 2001 by the world's regional chiropractic accrediting agencies (CCEs)*' (30) is Terry Crisp, who is Chair of CCEA.

Immediately following the WFC Congress (Gold Coast, October 2023) the CCEA is said to be holding a stakeholder engagement and feedback meeting, perhaps for recognition to validate their global activities noted above. This activity has not been announced to the profession, however the ACA has been invited and has advised members it will contribute in a strong and positive manner.

Whether or not the CCEA's '*stakeholder engagement*' achieves more beyond being a political exercise remains to be seen, but the fact remains that there are enduring issues facing the Chiropractic profession in Australia. These include:

- ▶ correcting the ill-defined and subjective assessment process for programmatic accreditation by the CCEA
- ▶ removing the institutional accreditation processes of CCEA given that the higher-level accreditation of institutions by TEQSA has rendered these redundant from 2011
- ▶ addressing the potential for credential inflation which weakens the profession's entry-level qualifications
- ▶ working to ease the debt-burden on new graduates (average student debt is now AUD\$27,620 (31) taking 9.6 years on average to repay. More than 3 million Australians {>11%} have Education debt)
- ▶ contributing to strengthen the real-world clinical experience of senior chiropractic students given the ongoing closure of community and charity clinics

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28. Glucina T, Krägeloh C, Spencer K, Holt K. Defining chiropractic professional identity: A concept analysis. *J Bodywork Move Thera.* 2023;35:75-83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbmt.2023.04.047>.

29. International Chiropractic Regulatory Society. Home. <https://www.chiroregulation.org/leadership.html>.

30. The Councils on Chiropractic Education International. Home. <https://www.cceintl.org/about>.

31. Gailberger J. Uni debts soar by \$2K. *Finance. News. The Herald-Sun (Melbourne).* 29 September 2023. p. 25.



- ▶ strengthening our weak Professional Identity, and
- ▶ strengthening overall skills levels given shrinking contact time at universities especially for the competent learning of psychomotor skills and clinical decision-making.

#### *An emerging issue of concern*

Chiropractic is not the only profession in which senior members lament what they see as an attitudinal issue in new graduates. The matter is a significant concern to the profession of Law to the extent it is claimed that *'Gen Z lawyers are working to live, not living to work'*. (32)

The symptom in Law parallels that in Chiropractic, namely Law firms are haemorrhaging junior lawyers who decide they are not cut out for the profession as *'low pay, long hours and scarce benefits contribute to pushing them out the door'*. Dudley explains *'There's definitely a different attitude to work, especially post-Covid. We've heard from a number of sources that people have more of a focus on work-life balance than they used to' ... 'The commitment level is not as high as it once was, and Gen Zs (have) questions whether they live to work or work to live'*.

One major issue identified for young workers was that they did not learn practical skills at university, and they therefore experienced a tough transition upon entering the workforce.

I do not have to continue as I know this will resonate with many readers, especially those who are growing multiple practices and hiring multiple new graduates. In the last month alone I have had two approaches from Chiropractors lamenting this issue and seeking ways to address it.

There are several issues here, not the least being the model of practice now being offered to new graduates which is essentially an employment contract where once the new graduate started their own business by hanging up their shingle and treating walk-ins. Australia has seen some massive practices built in this 'old' way, but it is not the way of today (or could it still be?).

#### **A proposition**

The profession must come together and forge clear plans to address the enduring issues, and also to consider the merit of Australia's only private college, the ACC, expanding with a Victorian campus. I suspect the leadership of ACC would have plans for this in place and would also have the confidence they could readily make such a move. I am not so sure. Having established a campus in Brisbane and a campus in Sydney from the base Chiropractic Campus in Mackay for *CQUniversity*, an organisation with deep pockets, I have an understanding of the costs, logistics, and pitfalls involved and they are significant.

History also tells us that the 'private college' concept is not new in Australia, in fact it is the way that Chiropractic education started in this nation. (33) I appreciate we are in another Century now but the harsh reality of property, equipment, and staffing remain powerful mountains to climb. I also appreciate that the 'private college' route is the way that both RMIT and Macquarie got their start.

I have every confidence that the ACC will, over time, grow to have well-functioning campuses nation-wide and that eventually will be the only educational institution for Chiropractors in Australia. This is a worthy vision of theirs and it is important that this vision is not damaged by a rush to be seen to be quickly reacting to the demise of RMIT's program.

RMIT's closure brings us a rich opportunity to now plan to succeed in the long-term, and I would like the ACA to invite *Chiropractic Australia* and all interested members of the profession, especially technique groups and special interest groups, to a *National Summit on Chiropractic Education*. I offer to convene and manage such a Summit as I have the required skills-set.

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32. Dudley E. Gen Z lawyers 'working to live, not live to work'. Legal Affairs. 27 September 2023. The Australian. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/legal-affairs/gen-z-lawyers-work-to-live-not-live-to-work-legal-researcher/news-story/6fccd04ff46f562c7b9c52dec2df74c4>.

33. Ebrall P. The Emergence of Chiropractic Education in Australia. Asia-Pac Chiropr J. 2023;3:4 URL [apcj.net/papers-issue-3-4/#EbrallEducationEmergenceAustralia](http://apcj.net/papers-issue-3-4/#EbrallEducationEmergenceAustralia).

I would like to see this happen before Christmas this year and to also have a firm strategy in place to counter the malicious intent of political medicine, whether it be via their not-for-profit FoSiM, or by direct, personal influence at the level of Deputy Vice-Chancellors.

For those readers who remain sceptical that FoSiM are still active or have any interest or capability to interfere in Australia's health care arena, I give this link (34) which reports their meeting with the Federal Health Minister just 2 months ago (23 July 2023). I also give [this link to their briefing notes for that meeting](#). Remember, these are only the *public* notes.

## Conclusion

*So how do you feel?*

Imagine, you are one of the very many RMIT graduates practicing in Australia and around the world. You proudly display your Chiropractic Qualification and a patient looks at it, sees it is from RMIT, and asks, 'how is that going?' You tell them it is now closed and is no more. Your patient asks, 'how does that make you feel?'

As an RMIT alumnus I feel embarrassed and will no longer state my qualifications were earned at that institution.

There are many other questions, and this *Journal* is the first to acknowledge with respect the spectrum of emotion flowing from members of the profession in general, and graduates of RMIT in particular.

Of greater importance and value, we stand ready to assist the ACA and individual Chiropractors in activities to support students as the program is taught out.

We are equally as committed to working with the Australian Chiropractic profession to build a stronger and improved, sustainable future through quality education.

Phillip Ebrall

Editor

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Melbourne, 28 September 2023

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## Declarations

- ▶ I have an interest in the ACA, having served two terms as an elected Director. I am a Life member.
- ▶ At this time I am not engaged with any institution or body to promote a new or existing program of Chiropractic education in Australia.

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34. FSM's meeting with Federal Health Minister. Friends of Science in Medicine. 23 July 2023. <https://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au/2023/07/23/fsms-meeting-with-federal-health-minister/>.

- ▶ I am engaged by universities outside Australia and am active in commencing new programs of Chiropractic education with those universities in their countries.
- ▶ I submitted an application to the CCEA for consideration as a member of their Steering Committee for renewing Program Standards in the belief I met or exceeded all stated selection criteria. My application was rejected without reason or discussion.

### *Papers on the history of the RMIT Chiropractic program*

- Ebrall P. The establishment of the International College of Chiropractic (ICC) Melbourne. *Asia-Pac Chiropr J.* 2022;3.2. URL [apcj.net/Papers-Issue-3-2/#ICC](https://apcj.net/Papers-Issue-3-2/#ICC)
- Ebrall P. The Emergence of Chiropractic Education in Australia. *Asia-Pac Chiropr J.* 2023;3.4 URL [apcj.net/papers-issue-3-4/#EbrallEducationEmergenceAustralia](https://apcj.net/papers-issue-3-4/#EbrallEducationEmergenceAustralia)
- Ebrall PS, Molyneux TP. Thirty years of chiropractic education at RMIT University: The consolidation period 1979 - 1999. *Chiropr J Aust.* 2005; 35:71-84.
- Ebrall PS, Molyneux TP. Thirty years of chiropractic education at RMIT University: The establishment period 1975 - 1978. *Chiropr J Aust* 2005; 35:29-38.

### *Books with a history of the RMIT Chiropractic program*

- Bryce MA, Ed. Pictorial history of the School of Chiropractic now at Phillip Institute of Technology. Chiropractic Alumni Association, Phillip Institute of Technology. Bundoora. 1981
- Carroll B. A decade of achievement. Melbourne: RMIT Press. 1995.

