

STATEMENT OF DECISION

Respondent:	Mr Aleksander Strande
Complainant:	Various

The Commission has removed from this Statement of Decision material which it considers to be confidential information under section 41B(5) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993*

1. The Complaints

- 1.1. Mr Aleksander Strande is an unregistered practitioner who mainly describes himself as a 'certified naturopath'¹ and a 'Natural Therapist'.² Mr Strande is the proprietor of Express Healing Pty Ltd trading as Express Healing ("Express Healing"). From July 2017 Mr Strande treated clients out of rooms situated at the rear of his residential premises at 13 Moorefield Avenue, Kogarah NSW 2217. On his website³, Mr Strande offers herbal treatment for pain, fatigue, anxiety, depression and other health conditions in addition to Reiki Healing to "*relax, decongest and oxygenate the body*". Mr Strande claims to use Iridology to diagnose patients. Mr Strande has been providing face to face consultations and phone consultations to clients interstate and overseas.
- 1.2. In October 2018, the Commission received a complaint from Mr Strande's client (Person A) regarding care and treatment provided by Mr Strande. The client raised concerns regarding Mr Strande's failure to provide any information regarding the ingredients and side effects of the supplements Mr Strande prescribed and provided to him; Mr Strande's aggressive and forceful comments to continue treatment with him; the cost of the treatment, and Mr Strande's qualifications.
- 1.3. In December 2018, the Commission received a further complaint in relation to Mr Strande. This complaint raised concerns regarding the treatment claims displayed on the website for Express Healing. This complaint was not made by a client of Mr Strande, but a Senior Policy Officer for the ACT Health Directorate (Person B).
- 1.4. On 15 March 2019, the Commission executed a search warrant at Mr Strande's residential premises at 13 Moorefield Avenue, Kogarah NSW 2217. The Commission seized several items relating to Mr Strande's qualifications and promotional material in addition to his computer hard drives and mobile phone. Following a forensic examination of the hard drive and phone, the Commission found a number of Mr Strande's clients had raised similar issues with Mr Strande as those raised in the complaints before the Commission.⁴ The Commission obtained statements from four of these clients (Persons C, D, E & F) who also made formal complaints to the Commission.

¹ Mr Strande's Curriculum Vitae at Tab 1

² Mr Strande's Naturopathic Services Acknowledgement and Agreement form found within the response of Mr Strande to complaint of Person A at Tab 2

³ <https://expresshealing.com.au>

⁴ Text messages can be found at Tabs 21 to 25

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 1.5. Pursuant to section 41AA of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993* (the Act), the Commission made an interim prohibition order restricting Mr Strande from providing health services, with effect from 1 April 2019. Further interim prohibition orders with the same terms have been made continuously every eight weeks since 1 April 2019.

2. Issues

- 2.1. The Commission investigated the following issues in this case:
 - 2.1.1. Whether Mr Strande breached the Code of Conduct for non-registered health practitioners ('the Code of Conduct') during his provision of health services.
 - 2.1.2. Whether Mr Strande poses a risk to the health or safety of members of the public.

3. Respondent

- 3.1 Mr Strande is currently 66 years old. Prior to the imposition of the interim prohibition order on Mr Strande in April 2019, he was working as a naturopath for his business, Express Healing located at 13 Moorefield Avenue, Kogarah NSW 2217.

Qualifications

- 3.2 The Commission has obtained information about Mr Strande's qualifications from his responses to the Commission; the Australian Committee of Natural Therapies (ACONT); documents obtained during the Commission's search warrant (including documents found on Mr Strande's computer hard drive) and through enquires made with organisations at which Mr Strande claimed to have attained his qualifications.
- 3.3 In his responses to the Commission dated 23 July 2018 and 4 December 2018 (Tabs 14 and 36) Mr Strande indicated that he has been practising as a naturopath for over thirty years. Mr Strande stated that he is a 'Natural Therapist' and is a registered Schedule 1 Member of the ACONT. Mr Strande claimed that he holds the following qualifications:-
 - 3.3.1. Bachelor of Science, degree in Biology (University of Lodz Poland)
 - 3.3.2. Masters of Science, degree in Microbiology (University of Lodz Poland)
 - 3.3.3. Masters of Science, degree in Herbal Medicine (Australian College of Natural Medicine, Brisbane, Australia)
 - 3.3.4. Masters of Science, degree in Clinical Nutrition (International Academy of Nutrition, Sydney, Australia).
 - 3.3.5. Masters of Science, degree in Homeopathy (Australian Centre for Homeopathy, Adelaide, Australia).
 - 3.3.6. Ph.D in Advanced Naturopathic Medicine (Hamilton University, USA)
- 3.4 Notably, Mr Strande failed to comply with a Notice issued to him under section 34A of the Health Care Complaints Act (the Act) dated 17 July 2019 that requested, in part, that he provide further details of his qualifications, experience and training.

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 3.5 The Commission's investigation in relation to Mr Strande's stated qualifications is set out at paragraph 5 below.

Work Experience

- 3.6 Mr Strande's curriculum vitae (Tab 1) was located on one of his computer hard drives. Mr Strande claims to have worked as a naturopath from 1990. From 1990 to 1993 he worked in Petrie Queensland, 1993 to 1998 in the ACT, 1998 to 2015 in Charlotte, Houston and San Diego USA trading as Best Healing Clinic. Mr Strande moved back to Canberra Australia in 2015 and commenced trading as Express Healing. The business was moved to Kogarah NSW in 2017.

Internet Profile

- 3.7 Mr Strande has a considerable internet profile. As noted above, his business Express Healing has a website and his details appear on a number of advertising directories. An internet search on naturopaths in the Kogarah area, conducted by the Commission on 4 June 2019, reveals two health search engines where Express Healing and the services of Mr Strande are listed as available.

3.7.1 On www.truelocal.com.au Express Healing's motto is listed as "*don't get drug, get heal*". The page lists the 'naturopath' (sic) as 'Aleks' and further states "*we find fast solution to following problems*". Some of the problems listed are mental problems, cancers and tumours and auto immune diseases. The page also makes mention of the patient testimonials that can be located at the Express Healing website.

3.7.2 On Natural Therapy Pages. (www.naturaltherapypages.com.au) there is reference to 'Ale' having over thirty years' experience as a naturopath and his international experience has given him a level of experience "*that is not seen anywhere else*". The link to Express Healing states "*Ale provides phone consultations for interstate and international clients interested in finding natural treatment for difficult to cure conditions*".

- 3.8 Mr Strande also previously had a website for a business called 'Simply Healing Clinic' located in San Diego, California USA. It appears that since the commencement of the Commission's investigation Mr Strande has shut down this website as it is no longer accessible. Mr Strande still has a Facebook page for Simply Healing Clinic⁵ which states it is located in San Diego, California USA. The page offers consultations in person and also offers phone consultations for interstate and international clients. 'Dr Strande' is listed as the naturopath with over twenty years' experience.

Prior Complaints

- 3.9 On 27 November 2017, the Commission received a complaint from Mr Strande's client regarding treatment he received from Mr Strande. After taking the herbs provided by Mr Strande, the client became very unwell and was taken to the hospital by ambulance. The hospital indicated that an ingredient in the herbs had reacted with the patient's prescribed antidepressant medication. Upon becoming aware of the client's hospitalisation, Mr Strande did not offer him an apology and instead told the client that if he did not continue treatment with him, he would revert back to pain and suffering.

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Simply-Healing-Clinic-313343458705169/>

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 3.10 In his complaint, the client also raised concerns regarding the different names that Mr Strande was using in his practice. The client noted that Mr Strande used the name "Aleksander Wieslaw Strande Kowlowski", however advertisements referred to him as "Alex Maestro"; the qualifications on the wall in his consulting room referred to him as "Aleksander Strande" and the contact name on his business website is 'Alex Strand'.
- 3.11 In his response to the Commission dated 23 July 2018, Mr Strande denied any wrongdoing in the treatment of the client. Mr Strande admitted that he may have said words to the effect of, "*you would not have encountered anybody like me*". Mr Strande asserted that his expertise is quite diverse and he believes that he is a very experienced naturopath. Mr Strande stated that he does go by the name of Alex Maestro as Maestro means 'teacher' in Spanish and that is how he regards himself and it is easier for clients to pronounce.
- 3.12 The client subsequently withdrew his complaint to the Commission. With the evidence available, the Commission was limited in the action it was able to take against Mr Strande. The Commission did however make a number of written comments to Mr Strande including the following reminders of his professional obligations and responsibilities under the Code of Conduct:
- 3.11.1. In addition to communicating with other health practitioners in the best interests of his clients and keeping appropriate records of his care and treatment of clients, Mr Strande was reminded that he is required to have a clinical basis for all treatments provided.
- 3.11.2. Mr Strande should take steps to ensure that his clients are aware of his legal name, to eliminate any potential form of misrepresentation to his clients in relation to his identity and/or qualifications. This would include referencing Mr Strande's legal name in advertising, websites, social media profiles, letterhead, agreements, business cards or other documentation associated with his provision of health services.

4. Investigation

- 4.1 The Commission obtained evidence during this investigation from the following sources:
- Mr Strande's curriculum vitae
 - Complaint from Person A of 13 October 2018
 - Further information provided to the Commission by Person A in an email dated 8 November 2018
 - Further information provided to the Commission by Person A (undated)
 - Mr Strande's response to the Commission dated 4 December 2018 including the clinical file of Person A
 - Commission statement of Person A dated 22 February 2019
 - Complaint from Person B of 19 December 2018
 - Commission Statement of Person B dated 28 June 2019
 - Sample of statements on Express Healing website
 - Express Healing You Tube Testimonials
 - Collation of statements on Facebook

Health Care Complaints Commission

- Complaint from Person C of 20 March 2019 with attached correspondence to Mr Strande
- Commission Statement of Person C dated 16 April 2019 including text messages
- Mr Strande's response to the Commission dated 10 May 2019
- Complaint from Person D of 12 May 2019.
- Commission Statement of Person D dated 26 July 2019
- Complaint of Person E of 24 March 2019
- Commission Statement of Person E dated 18 June 2019 including copies of email correspondence between Person E and Mr Strande
- Complaint of Person F of 25 March 2019 attaching email correspondence between Person F and Mr Strande and photographs of Person F's sunburn.
- Commission Statement of Person F dated 12 July 2019
- Copy of text messages between Mr Strande and clients relating to the labelling of supplements
- Copy of text messages between Mr Strande and clients relating to side effects of supplements
- Copy of text messages between Mr Strande and clients relating to forcing treatment and charging of credit cards
- Copies of text messages between Mr Strande and clients relating to aggressive tone
- Copies of text messages between Mr Strande and clients relating to exaggerated claims
- Information from Theresa Cumbers, President of ACONT regarding information provided by Mr Strande regarding his qualifications
- Photographs of framed qualifications belonging to Mr Strande taken during the search warrant
- Information regarding Hamilton University
- Correspondence from the Australian Colleges of Natural Medicine, Brisbane, Australia dated 12 July 2019
- Correspondence from the International Academy of Nutrition, Sydney, Australia dated 20 June 2019
- Pictures of Mr Strande's advertising located during the course of the search warrant
- Copy of Mr Strande's thesis "*Effective Naturopathic Treatments in Post Viral Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*"
- Copy of search warrant/property seizure form – dated 15 March 2019
- Copy of search warrant footage
- Prior complaint dated 25 November 2017
- Response from Mr Strande dated 23 July 2018 (including records of client and Settlement and General Release agreement between Mr Strande and client)
- Section 40 correspondence to Mr Strande dated 23 November 2018
- Email from Mr Strande dated 28 November 2018 in reply (no submissions)
- Outcome letter to Mr Strande re (comments) 30 November 2018
- S40 submission from Mr Strande dated 17 September 2019

Health Care Complaints Commission

5. Summary of Evidence – Mr Strande’s qualifications

- 5.1 The Commission has conducted enquiries regarding all of Mr Strande’s qualifications set out at paragraph 3.3 above.

Bachelor of Science, degree in Biology (University of Lodz Poland)

Masters of Science, degree in Microbiology (University of Lodz Poland)

- 5.2 The Commission contacted the University of Lodz Poland to verify the above qualifications. The University has refused to release the information regarding Mr Strande for privacy reasons. Further enquiries have been made with the university to verify if the two courses were offered by the university at the time Mr Strande claims to have completed his studies. The university did not reply to the correspondence.
- 5.3 The Commission did not locate any evidence of these qualifications during the search warrant executed on 15 March 2019. However, documents provided to the Commission by ACONT include a letter from the Committee of Overseas Professional Qualification in the ACT dated 2 August 1982.⁶ The letter indicates that Mr Strande was seeking the Committee’s Expert Panel in Generalist Qualifications to make an assessment in Australian terms of the qualifications set out in the documents Mr Strande submitted. The letter suggests that Mr Strande provided documentation for a Magister Biologii (Biology) with the grade ‘good’ awarded in 1978 at the University of Lodz, Poland. It further states, *“The course for the Magister Biologii normally required five years of full time study and the major area of study was microbiology. A thesis was a requirement. The Expert Panel in this case assesses the qualifications as comparable to an Australian Honours degree”*.
- 5.4 The Australian Government, Department of Education have advised the Commission that any supporting documentation attached to Mr Strande’s application to the Committee of Overseas Professional Qualification were not archived.
- 5.5 Also included in the documents provided to the Commission by ACONT is a letter dated 3 May 1991 from Mr Strande to the Australian College of Natural Medicine in Queensland seeking exemptions for his previous studies.⁷ In this letter, Mr Strande makes reference to previously providing documents relating to his Bachelor of Science (honours degree) in Microbiology. The Commission notes that there is no reference to Mr Strande’s Masters of Science (Microbiology) that he claims to have completed in the late 1970’s.

Masters of Science, degree in Herbal Medicine (Australian College of Natural Medicine, Brisbane, Australia)

- 5.6 By email dated 12 July 2019, the Australian College of Natural Medicine confirmed with the Commission that Mr Strande was enrolled at the Brisbane Campus in the early 1990’s in a Diploma of Applied Science (Naturopathy). Mr Strande completed all required subjects to complete the Diploma. The college confirmed that it has never offered a masters level qualification.

⁶ Tab 26.

⁷ ACONT documents, Tab 26.

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 5.7 During the course of the search warrant executed by the Commission on 15 March 2019, the Commission officers located a framed certificate of Diploma of Herbal Medicine awarded to Mr Strande on 30 June 1993.

Masters of Science, degree in Clinical Nutrition (International Academy of Nutrition, Sydney, Australia)

- 5.8 By email dated 20 June 2018, the International Academy of Nutrition confirmed with the Commission that Mr Strande graduated on 17 July 1993 with a post graduate Diploma in Clinical Nutrition. The academy confirmed that it has never offered a Master of Science degree.

- 5.9 During the course of the search warrant executed by the Commission on 15 March 2019, the Commission officers located a framed certificate of Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Nutrition awarded to Mr Strande on 16 July 1993.

Masters of Science, degree in Homeopathy (Australian Centre for Homeopathy, Adelaide, Australia).

- 5.10 The Commission has attempted to make contact with the Australian Centre for Homeopathy, however has not received any response. Nevertheless, the Commission has obtained documentation that Mr Strande submitted to ACONT in support of his membership application. This documentation includes a copy of a certificate of Diploma of Professional Homeopathic Prescribing, dated 13 July 1998 issued by the Australian Centre for Homeopathy.

- 5.11 There is no evidence that Mr Strande completed a master's level qualification from the Australian Centre for Homeopathy. Further, a search of the national register for providers and courses via the Australian Government Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) website reveals that the Australian Centre for Homeopathy is not a current or past accredited tertiary education provider and there is no current or past accredited course in homeopathy at a master's level.⁸

Ph.D. in Advanced Naturopathic Medicine – Hamilton University, USA

- 5.12 During the course of the search warrant executed by the Commission on 15 March 2019, a framed certificate from Hamilton University in Wyoming USA was found on the wall of Mr Strande's office. The certificate indicated that Mr Strande had completed the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Advanced Naturopathic Medicine. The certificate was dated 14 December 1998. A red bound book entitled "Aleksander Strande Ph.D of Advanced Naturopathic Medicine 1998" was also located in the wardrobe of Mr Strande's consulting room during the course of the search warrant.
- 5.13 During the course of the search warrant, Mr Strande was asked if he had sought any approval for this qualification to be recognised in Australia. Mr Strande responded, *"It's not relevant to my practice, I don't need to have it"*.
- 5.14 The Commission's enquiries have revealed that Hamilton University is no longer in existence in Wyoming. The institution was unaccredited and had no authorisation from the United States Department of Education.

⁸ <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>

Health Care Complaints Commission

Naturopathic Services Acknowledgement and Agreement

- 5.15 Included in Mr Strande's clinical records for Person A, is a copy of a form entitled 'Naturopathic Services Acknowledgement and Agreement'. This is a consent form that Mr Strande provides to his clients for signing. At paragraph 2 of this form, it is stated that Mr Strande holds two diplomas and a post graduate diploma. This contradicts the information that Mr Strande has provided to the Commission (and also published on the internet) that these qualifications were at a master's level.

6. Summary of Evidence – Mr Strande's treatment claims

Cure for cancer

- 6.1. As noted above, the Commission received a complaint from Person B regarding the treatment claims displayed on the website for Express Healing. In her role as a Senior Policy Officer for the ACT Health Directorate, Person B was conducting an internet search on 'cancer cure'. Person B was concerned with the following aspects of the Express Healing Website:

6.1.1. There is an article on the website that states, *'In any cancer, time is of the essence and your healing process should start yesterday, not tomorrow. One should always consider natural therapy for cancers as it helps you with the healing process faster'*. The article further states, *'A lot of cancers were healed using natural substances such as...'* and *'Don't even start trying to heal cancer if you don't understand natural therapeutic doses of plants and minerals'*.

6.1.2. A search on the patient testimonials on the website revealed claims that Mr Strande had cured three different types of cancer – vaginal, stomach and bladder. A further claim of a patient in a testimonial is that Mr Strande saved the life of someone with Stage 4 prostate cancer. Mr Strande is the person who records the testimonials and his voice can be heard in the background and he often prompts the patients. The patients make reference to seeing 'Dr Alex', 'Alex' or 'Mr Strande'. The patient testimonials appear on You Tube and the Express Healing Website.

6.1.2.1. There is a You Tube testimonial that was uploaded to the Express Healing Facebook page on 22 January 2019 with an elderly man who claims to have been cured of stomach cancer after taking herbs from Mr Strande *'for quite a while'*. He claims to have had a blood test and ultrasound which shows that he has no more cancer.⁹

6.1.2.2. A further You Tube testimonial was uploaded on 16 February 2018. A female in the video states that she was diagnosed with pre-cancerous cervical cancer. She states that after four days of treatment with Alex she has no pain and is so happy to have been cured.¹⁰

6.1.2.3. On 11 January 2018 a further You Tube testimonial was uploaded on Facebook. It features a female who states she is from the Ukraine and is forty-five years old. She states that on 26 May she

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKJqitVlrKY&feature=share>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKJqitVlrKY&feature=share>

Health Care Complaints Commission

had a problem with virus Papilloma 16 positive. She claims that when she saw the doctor he told her he found *"the cancer first step."* She also states that she found *"Doctor Alex" and he helped her with natural herbs and after a short time he helped her 'fix her problem.'* Mr Strande is heard asking the female what she means when she says *'fix my problem'*. She then states that when she visited the doctor and *"he looks inside and says everything is clear."*¹¹

- 6.1.2.4. On 10 May 2018, another You Tube testimonial was uploaded on Express Healing's Facebook page which implies that cancer can be cured. It features a man who is said to have Stage 4 Cancer. The post identifies the testimonial as 'Cancer (Stage 4) started in prostate Spread to bone/ severe bone and muscle pain'. He states that his pain was 'at 110' but after two weeks with Mr Strande and herbs his pain level is down to about 5%. He states that although *"some of the things don't taste that great if it saves your life, who gives a - huh - rat's"*.¹²

- 6.2. In addition to Person B's complaint, the Commission's examination of emails and text messages located on Mr Strande's devices seized during the search warrant on 15 March 2019 revealed an email from a lady whose father had terminal cancer. In the email to Mr Strande dated 19 June 2018 she stated, *"You misrepresented your business and lied to my father stating you would cure his terminal cancer and had him sign a contract under the belief he would be cured"*.¹³

Other treatment claims

- 6.3. Other than claims to cure cancer, the Commission has noted the following statements published on the Express Healing website:
- 6.3.1. Bipolar treatments – Patients respond well to treatment within 72 hours of using natural herbs and amino acids, and the disorder typically diminishes within a couple of months.
 - 6.3.2. Eczema – Only natural remedies can cure Eczema. Prescription drugs and classic medical protocols have not been successful in controlling the symptoms of Eczema.
 - 6.3.3. Hepatitis C – Naturopathic approach is very successful in putting Hepatitis C into remission or getting rid of it altogether.
 - 6.3.4. Schizophrenia – People begin to see results more or less overnight, and are typically cured by three months.
 - 6.3.5. Stroke Recovery – 'Why would someone settle for years of recovery when this condition can be solved within weeks or months!' 'It's cruel to say but some people are just in love with their disease.'

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD37FZ_rYW8&feature=share

¹² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bH0EPuJT46U&feature=player_embedded

¹³ Found at Tab 25

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 6.4. Through the search warrant executed on 15 March 2019, the Commission obtained evidence of Mr Strande's exaggerated claims (Tab 25) regarding the treatment he can offer for serious conditions in text messages and emails to clients. Set out below are some examples:
- 6.4.1. 15 May 2018 – To a patient who has recently been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. Mr Strande writes, *"It was good talking to you today. I have had a lot of patients with ALS over the last 30 years or so. 'Riluteic' doesn't work. Combination of liquid herbs and aminoacids is the fastest way to get you walking again"*.
- 6.4.2. 4 April 2018 – a client writes to Mr Strande, *"Really. You sound like a miracle healer. Seriously"*. Mr Strande replies, *"That's what I am. Check 'Testimonials' on my website"*.
- 6.4.3. 5 August 2018 – Mr Strande sends text message to client after talking to them. *"Good talking to you. Make an appointment after work. You know your regular dr's wont cure your immune cocktail. Don't procrastinate. You suffered enough"*.
- 6.4.4. 13 August 2018 – Potential clients sends message that he will be attending the Centre for Digestive Diseases to seek treatment for stomach issues. Mr Strande replies in SMS, *"That sounds like an orthodox medicine treatment. You need some outside the box. Sad, you will be going circles, you will get a bit better and you won't get cured. Come today at 3pm anyway. You are too young 36yrs old to suffer like that"*. The patient replies, *"Sorry I am working with them"*. Mr Strande replies, *"You can work with them for the next 20 yrs. Its ok. Come here to heal your digestive pain fast"*.

7. Summary of Evidence – Mr Strande's care and treatment to various clients

- 7.1. As noted above, the Commission has received a number of complaints from Mr Strande's clients. Evidence obtained from Persons A, C, D, E & F is set out at paragraphs 7.6 – 7.44 below. Through the search warrant executed, the Commission has also obtained evidence of similar issues being raised in emails and text messages between Mr Strande and a large number of other clients. This is set out in paragraphs 7.45 – 7.48 below.
- 7.2. Mr Strande has only provided the Commission with his records for Person A. By email dated 27 May 2019, Mr Strande's legal representatives advised the Commission that Mr Strande arranged for his patients files *"to be stored in a friend's storage facility"*, Mr Strande did not have keys to the facility and the friend was on holidays. In a subsequent email dated 27 June 2019, Mr Strande's legal representatives advised the Commission that *"rain water leaked into the storage shed and all the files were destroyed."*
- 7.3. Mr Strande has also provided responses to complaints from Person A and Person C. Notably, all the complaints from Mr Strande's clients raise very similar issues regarding Mr Strande's failure to provide any information relating to the ingredients and side effects of the supplements; Mr Strande's aggressive and forceful comments to continue treatment with him and the cost of the treatment.

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 7.4. During the search warrant executed on 15 March 2019, Mr Strande was asked to explain how he ensured that the herbal supplements he provided were not adversely interacting with other medications that the clients were taking. Mr Strande stated:

"I check what drugs they use on google the contraindications in terms of herbs and then make sure that there's none of those herbs included. Say take a drug like Prozac an antidepressant and so if I am going to give them and they are still depressed then I will give them say oats which is antidepressant or skull cap which is anti-depressant and check is oats and skull cap is not contraindicated".

- 7.5. Mr Strande also indicated that it was not his usual practice to directly make enquiries with his client's treating doctors and would ask the client to check with their general practitioners as to "what is permissible or not permissible".

Mr Strande's care and treatment of Person A (Tab 2)

- 7.6. Person A had been diagnosed with arthritis in his sternum. He also suffered from severe mouth ulcers. Person A found Mr Strande on the Express Healing website. The website had a page on arthritic pain as well as a testimonial from someone suffering from arthritic pain who benefitted quickly from treatment at Express Healing.
- 7.7. Over the course of approximately five weeks in July-August 2018, Person A had face to face consultations with Mr Strande at least twice a week. At each consultation, Mr Strande gave Person A a large number of supplements (up to 15 at a time), the powders in clear satchel bags and the liquids in small bottles. Mr Strande also provided two Reiki sessions to Person A. Person A estimates that he spent over \$2000 in a five week period.
- 7.8. During the course of the treatment Person A alleges that he felt Mr Strande convinced him that his conditions were dire and that he needed immediate treatment and that he was the only one who could cure him. Mr Strande told Person A that his mouth ulcers were a virus and he was a microbiologist and loved viruses. Mr Strande told Person A that the ulcers would be gone in a week. In another consultation Mr Strande told Person A that he probably had a tumour in his hip.
- 7.9. Mr Strande provided a sheet at each consultation outlining when to take the supplements. Person A states that at no time did Mr Strande explain what each of the supplements were or what he was taking them for. At one point, Person A states that he was taking in excess of 96 tablets per day along with amino acid drinks and concentrated herbal potions.
- 7.10. When Person A decided to terminate the therapeutic relationship, Mr Strande said to Person A, "Are you feeling suicidal?" Person A said, "No I feel fine, why?" Mr Strande said, "Because if you stop seeing me you will be committing suicide."
- 7.11. Person A has provided the Commission with two supplements he received from Mr Strande in zip lock bags. One bag containing a pink rock like substance has 'minerals. (Person A's name) 24-08-2018 Take x 2 tablespoons x 1 daily'. The sticker also has Mr Strande's business and contact details listed and identifies Mr Strande as 'Aleksander-Wieslaw-Strande-Kozlowski Ph.D'. The second bag has a brown substance with a sticker that has 'PM Amino's Person A's name 20-07-2018 2 tablespoons x1 times a day'. Neither bag contains a list of ingredients.

Health Care Complaints Commission

Mr Strande's response and records

- 7.12. In his response to the Commission dated 4 December 2018, Mr Strande denied any wrongdoing in the treatment of Person A. Mr Strande asserted that he did not provide any timeframes for recovery to Person A *"as each person is different and each body reacts differently"*. Further, Mr Strande denied diagnosing Person A with a tumour and stated *"I am not a medical doctor. I do not diagnose diseases or treat illnesses"*. The Commission notes that Mr Strande's assertions are contrary to his claims published on his website regarding diagnosing and treating illnesses within specific timeframes.
- 7.13. Mr Strande also claims that he always explains to his patients what the supplements are for and what they contain. Notably, through the search warrant executed on 15 March 2019, the Commission found text messages on Mr Strande's phone from Person A that contradict Mr Strande's claims. Person A sent Mr Strande a text message on 28 August 2018 where he asked him if he had changed the ingredients in the AM Amino Acids as they taste bitter compared to the previous batch which tasted sweet. Person A further stated that the supplements are *"killing my appetite and giving me a bit of discomfort in my stomach. What is in it?"* Without disclosing the ingredients Mr Strande asked Person A to take *"1/2 teaspoon baking soda in little water 4 times a day"*.
- 7.14. Notably, Mr Strande admitted to billing Person A's credit card and sending him further supplements without Person A's prior consent.
- 7.15. Mr Strande's records for Person A provided to the Commission note all the ingredients of the herbs he prescribed to Person A and details of each consultation. Given that these are the only client records available, the Commission cannot determine whether these records represent Mr Strande's usual practice in record keeping.

Mr Strande's care and treatment of Person C

- 7.16. Person C had surgery for breast cancer in 2017 as well as subsequent treatments including chemotherapy, Herceptin and radiation. Person C had been given a one year clear mammogram and ultrasound report in May 2018. Person C commenced face to face consultations and subsequent treatment with Mr Strande for advice and supplemental treatment to maintain her overall health and well-being.
- 7.17. During the course of the first consultation Mr Strande told Person C that cancer was still circulating around her body. Mr Strande dismissed Person C's clear reports and said he would 'fix' her and improve her mood and she would be feeling fantastic.
- 7.18. Mr Strande performed Reiki, gave Person C a series of supplements, powders and herbs, as well as liquid collagen for her wrinkles. The majority of supplements were not sealed and had been mixed or decanted on his premises and had no labels or ingredients listed.
- 7.19. Person C informed Mr Strande that she was currently taking an anti-depressant. Person C emphasized that she could not take St John's Wort as she was aware this was a contraindication when on anti-depressants. Mr Strande assured Person C that he had not prescribed St John's Wort and all she needed to do was stay out of the sun as she could get photo sensitivity with the herbs.
- 7.20. Person C suggested that Mr Strande could help her son who suffers from anxiety and also takes an anti-depressant. Mr Strande spoke to Person C's son over the phone

Health Care Complaints Commission

and couriered the supplements and herbs to Person C's house. Person C alleges that Mr Strande charged her \$660 plus \$14.40 for courier fees.

- 7.21. Person C started to experience an unusual sensation in her hands and face. When she asked Mr Strande if the herbs he had given her had St John's Wort, he shouted at Person C and told her she was being paranoid and that she had a psychosis. Mr Strande insisted Person C take more supplements which he couriered to her house.
- 7.22. Person C decided to terminate the therapeutic relationship with Mr Strande as she googled information on St John's Wort and reactions with anti-depressants and it described the symptoms she was experiencing. A number of supplements were returned to Mr Strande and a refund provided.

Mr Strande's response to the complaint

- 7.23. In his response to the Commission dated 4 December 2018, Mr Strande denied all of the allegations made by Person C. He claimed that he provided Person C with the ingredients of the herbs and made sure she was not given any St John's Wort.
- 7.24. Mr Strande asserted that he did not charge Person C's son for the consultation. Notably, through the search warrant executed on 15 March 2019, the Commission found text messages on Mr Strande's phone from Person C that contradict Mr Strande's claims. Person C sent a message to Mr Strande on 18 August 2018 which stated, "*Hi Alex, can you please let me know the breakdown of the \$660 that was charged for [Patient C's son] yesterday. Thanks and have a lovely weekend*". Mr Strande replied, "Supplements (sic) \$495, initial consult \$165 Freight \$14.40".

Mr Strande's care and treatment of Person D

- 7.25. Person D stated that her forty-five year old son found Mr Strande via his website Express Healing and contacted Mr Strande for assistance in replacing the medication Suboxone 14mg prescribed for drug addiction, with natural supplements. Person D and her son live in Victoria. Person D's son has diminished mental functioning, schizophrenia, a history of use of illicit drugs, periods of incarceration and admissions to several psychiatric facilities.
- 7.26. Mr Strande contacted Person D in order for her to fund the treatment and supplements for her son. Person D initially refused to pay for the proposed herbal program. Mr Strande called Person D on a second occasion making claims that he had fixed other clients with similar issues. Mr Strande referred Person D to the testimonials located on his website. Mr Strande told Person D this was her son's last chance to get better by doing his program and that if she didn't support it, she would regret it.
- 7.27. Person D felt pressured and agreed to pay for her son to trial the program for one month. Mr Strande informed Person D that the supplements he provided would replace the prescription medication her son was taking. Mr Strande informed Person D and her son that the supplements would be better for him. On the advice of the son's general practitioner, he decided to take both the prescription medication and the supplements.
- 7.28. Mr Strande consulted with Person D's son via Skype consultations and supplements were posted. There were five consultations over a period of a month costing

Health Care Complaints Commission

approximately \$2300. Person D asked Mr Strande to provide details as to what the supplements purported to do. Mr Strande took the complainant's credit card details and charged her directly without firstly advising her of the costs of the supplements and what they were supposed to achieve.

- 7.29. Person D told Mr Strande that she would not allow him to charge her credit card anymore and that she would only pay on receipt of an invoice by electronic transfer. Mr Strande became aggressive in his communication when Person D continually questioned him.
- 7.30. Mr Strande sent Person D an aggressive email stating that her son's doctor has had six years to make him better with no result. Mr Strande stated, *"I am not his dad. I just got him results that no one did before."*

Mr Strande's care and treatment of Person E

- 7.31. In her complaint of 12 May 2019, Person E stated that she sought the assistance of Mr Strande to help her daughter who was recovering from anorexia and was also suffering from anxiety. Mr Strande initially stated that he had treated patients with eating disorders in the past and improvements would occur within a week. Mr Strande informed Person E at the first consultation that he could cure her daughter and that anyone who had treated her in the past, did not know what they were doing.
- 7.32. During the course of the first consultation, Mr Strande prescribed Person E's daughter with 'morning herbs' to be taken at breakfast and lunch, 'evening herbs' to be taken at dinner and before bed. He further prescribed Amino Acids for morning (breakfast and lunch) and evening (dinner and before bed). The bags were labelled with Person E's daughter's name, the date, the dosage to take and the amount of times per day to take the supplements.
- 7.33. Mr Strande asked Person E how he could help Person E. Person E went on to tell Mr Strande that she was suffering from stress and anxiety due to the strain her daughter's condition was having on their family. Mr Strande provided Person E a number of supplements and herbs packaged the same as the ones supplied to her daughter.
- 7.34. At the end of the consultation, Mr Strande indicated that he could also help Person E's other daughter who was suffering from stress and anxiety due to the family issues and completing her HSC. Following a phone consultation, Mr Strande posted supplements for Person E's other daughter. The items were packaged the same way. There were no ingredients listed on any of the bags.
- 7.35. After each consultation, Mr Strande would bill Person E's credit card and post a large number of supplements. Person E stated that Mr Strande did not explain to her during the consultations what he was sending and what each supplement was for. Person E ended up with an excessive amount of supplements and each time she informed Mr Strande she still had supplements left, he would bill her credit card and send more supplements. Over a period of a month, Person E and her two daughters had approximately seven consultations with Mr Strande and were charged \$6181.85 for the consultations, supplements and postage.
- 7.36. After the first week of treatment, Person E and her daughter suffering with anorexia felt nauseous. By the second week both were suffering from diarrhoea. Person E spoke to Mr Strande and he advised them to take Imodium and continue to take the

Health Care Complaints Commission

supplements. After three weeks, both Person E and her daughter stopped taking the supplements and decided to cease treatment with Mr Strande.

- 7.37. Person E contacted Mr Strande to cancel her appointment. Person E's husband also sent an email to Mr Strande advising again of the cancellation. Mr Strande phoned Person E and told her that she should continue the treatments without her husband knowing and this could be achieved by paying cash. Mr Strande sent a message to Person E stating "*so are you abandoning [daughter's] treatment now?*" Mr Strande made the complainant feel guilty that she decided not to continue with the treatment.

Mr Strande's care and treatment of Person F

- 7.38. In her complaint of 25 March 2019, Person F stated that she contacted Mr Strande for assistance with a particular virus that his website indicated he had been successful in treating.¹⁴ Person F stated that she wanted a naturopath who had the science background and felt that Mr Strande was a good fit given he had advertised himself as holding a PhD.
- 7.39. At the first consultation, Person F saw Mr Strande specifically for her virus and pathogen. Mr Strande kept stating, "what else, what else?" probing Person F for more information. She informed Mr Strande that she was stressed at work and having relationship issues. Mr Strande used this further information to provide further supplements for Person F.
- 7.40. Person F had four face to face consultations with Mr Strande over a period of a month and spent in excess of \$2000 for consultations and supplements provided by Mr Strande.
- 7.41. Person F stated that she questioned Mr Strande on several occasions as to what was included in his herbal juice which was a concoction of herbs. The first couple of times Mr Strande did not openly explain to Person F what each herb was. The herb juice was placed in a bottle which was not labelled.
- 7.42. After taking the herbs, Person F began to experience side effects including photosensitivity and tingling sensations on her hands and face. Person F told Mr Strande on two occasions about the side effects she was experiencing. The first time she raised it, Mr Strande responded like she was paranoid. On the second occasion, Mr Strande told her about the St John's Wort and gave her an oil, which she later found out was primrose oil, to counteract the side effects.
- 7.43. Person F also suffered from other side effects such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. She informed Mr Strande that she couldn't consume the stated dosages of the supplements as she was feeling ill and Mr Strande was disappointed and informed her that she couldn't stop taking the supplements.
- 7.44. Person F informed Mr Strande that she wished to end the therapeutic relationship. Mr Strande informed her that she was 'depressed' and had 'psychotic behaviour' and that 'I don't know what I am talking about'.

Mr Strande's emails and text messages

¹⁴ Person F did not disclose the particular virus she was seeking treatment for to the Commission.

Health Care Complaints Commission

Labelling of supplements

- 7.45. A large number of patients complained about the fact the supplements provided to them were not labelled and did not have a list of ingredients. Text messages on Mr Strande's phone in this regard include the following:
- 7.45.1. 5 February 2018 *"There r no label on the bottles. And we don't know what is in the powders...Its really hard to purchase items not labelled. We need proper official labels"*.
- 7.45.2. 7 February 2018 *"Sarah felt v v sick afer taking ur new bottle of herbs. I had to take her to the doc and doc wanna know urgently detal content of each herb. We need full label info. Why is it tasste different and why is she sick. Its our right to know what we are talking. Pls reply asap. It's urgent"*.
- 7.45.3. 20 August 2018 *"Hey Alex can I get an ingredient list for last weeks session?"*
- 7.45.4. 27 September 2018 *"You still have not told me what the liquid herbs are doing for me in terms of my inflammation and pain"*.
- 7.45.5. 4 October 2018 *"I have become gastric and vomiting needed to visit doctor. Are you able to please list the ingredients in the liquid herbs and what is the difference between AM & PM herbs"*.

Side effects

- 7.46. A number of patients complained that they suffered symptoms of painful sensitivity to cold and tingling fingers, stinging burning hands, sensitivity to sunlight. Text messages on Mr Strande's phone in this regard include the following:
- 7.46.1. 27 May 2018 *"The side effects – yes, painful sensitivity to cold and feeling of deep pain to any pressure apply to my feet at hands The side effects should be discussed and explained before treatment, but you did not. I am worse than I was and feeling like killing myself to end this suffering"*.
- 7.46.2. 21 July 2018 (All the same person) *"Hey Alex. I'm outside today for work and my skin feels like it is burning, is this normal?" "I stopped taking the medication cause the sunburn in unbearable". "Hey Alex, how long till the tingling sensation goes away you reckon?"*
- 7.46.3. 31 January 2019 *"No doctor would ever recommend to take 40 capsules a day or syrup because of the medicines that you gave me at your clinic. I had severe problems for a couple of weeks my body temperature was constantly changing my entire body and rashes it was allergic. I had nauseous feeling accompanied with loose watery stools. All these issues had made me go into depression..."*.

Forcing treatment and charging credit cards

- 7.47. A large number of patients complained that Mr Strande sent them medication and charged their credit cards without authorisation. Text messages on Mr Strande's phone in this regard include the following

Health Care Complaints Commission

- 7.47.1. 10 July 2018 *"You sent a package of supplements to me without disclosing any coatings (costings) at all and I did not give you permission to send these to me before knowing any costs."*
- 7.47.2. 27 September 2018 *"Hi Alex I received in the mail today AM PM herbs I had no idea that you were sending these?? What are they for? I also did not give you my credit card detail so wondering how was it charged. In a previous email you assured me that you do not use credit card unless prior permission is given?"*
- 7.47.3. 1 October 2018 *"Ale, why'd you send me moore liver herbs? I don't need it. I haven't got much money left"*.
- 7.47.4. 8 October 2018 *"Alexsander, You charged me last Friday on my Visa \$165 agreed on then added \$655AUD. Please forward a copy of invoice..i.e. what I bought, what you sent me. Your original fee was agreed \$165 plus \$60 for herbs AND you said I would be sourcing products myself here..i.e. paying for them, which I have been"*.
- 7.47.5. 13 October 2018 *"Hey Alex I got charged \$277 from my card the other day but I haven't asked for any more medicines"*.
- 7.47.6. 14 October 2018 *"The stress that was created in my life by you withdrawing \$718 more than we agreed from my Visa card has an impact."*
- 7.48. In many instances, the Commission found an aggressive tone in Mr Strande's communication with clients especially if they were considering other treatment options or ceasing treatment with him. Some examples include:
 - 7.48.1. 9 August 2018 When a patient cancels an appointment, Mr Strande responds, *"Tom mental condition will NEVER improve until he starts on naturopathic program."*
 - 7.48.2. 19 February 2018 When a patient questions Mr Strande's treatment he responds via SMS, *"There is no other path. Your small country town will not offer anything. Don't be ridiculous or I will start thinking that you are in love with your disease."*
 - 7.48.3. 11 October 2018 Patient requests receipts and provider number. Mr Strande replies, *"What exactly do you wish to clear up. You abandoned a successful treatment"*.

Mr Strande's section 40 submission

- 7.49. The Commission wrote to Mr Strande on 3 September 2019 proposing to take action under sections 41A and 41B of the Act and inviting submissions within 28 days.
- 7.50. By letter dated 17 September 2019, Mr Strande's legal representative made submissions on his behalf in response to the proposed action. Mr Strande made the following submissions under section 40(1) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993*.
 - 7.50.1. In response to the complaints made about Mr Strande, the Commission effectively shut down Mr Strande's business and he decided to retire.

Health Care Complaints Commission

7.50.2. Mr Strande does not intend to work in Australia in any healing profession capacity.

7.50.3. After the Commission effectively shut down Mr Strande's business, he placed all his files in storage. The files were later destroyed by water. Mr Strande indicated he has no way to remember hundreds of cases and is unable to respond to the complaints from individual people; and

7.50.4. Mr Strande otherwise relies upon the responses he has previously provided to the Commission regarding the complaints of Person A and Person C.

8. Findings and Determination

- 8.1. The Commission has considered all of the evidence obtained during its investigation of the complaint and makes the following findings:
- 8.2. The Commission is satisfied that Mr Strande has attained some qualifications relevant to the field of naturopathy. However, Mr Strande has wilfully misrepresented and overstated, to the Commission and to the public, the level of his qualifications. Mr Strande has falsely claimed to hold post graduate qualifications at a master's level in clinical nutrition, herbal medicine and homeopathy. The Commission's enquiries have confirmed that Mr Strande had diplomas in herbal medicine and homeopathy and a post-graduate diploma in clinical nutrition, rather than the master's level qualifications he has claimed to hold.
- 8.3. The Commission has been unable to verify whether Mr Strande holds a Bachelor of Science (Biology) and Masters of Science (Microbiology) from the University of Lodz in Poland. The Commission notes that Mr Strande does make reference to the bachelor's degree (and also appears to have provided proof of the qualification) in his correspondence with the Committee of Overseas Professional Qualification and the Australian College of Natural Medicine, however, makes no reference to the master's degree. The Commission has real concerns that Mr Strande is falsely claiming to hold the master's degree in the field of microbiology in similar vein to his misrepresentations about his other qualifications at paragraph 8.2 above.
- 8.4. By being dishonest about his level of qualifications, Mr Strande is critically undermining the trust that members of the public place in him as a health practitioner. Evidence obtained by the Commission from Mr Strande's clients confirms that some of them were misguided by the false belief that Mr Strande held extensive qualifications and thus would be providing them with the most appropriate and effective treatment.
- 8.5. In addition to misleading his clients regarding his qualifications, the Commission has grave concerns regarding Mr Strande's outlandish treatment claims published on his business website and communicated directly to clients. On his business website, Mr Strande claims to have cured people with cancer and also offers "*successful*" treatments for other serious conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and hepatitis. Mr Strande claims his treatments will provide results in very short timeframes such as "*overnight*", "*72 hours*" and "*within weeks*". Even more concerning is that Mr Strande portrays himself as superior to mainstream health care practitioners and encourages his clients to forgo prescribed medications and adopt his treatment regime. The Commission is concerned that vulnerable members of the public suffering from

Health Care Complaints Commission

complex medical and mental health conditions may make detrimental health care decisions based on Mr Strande's advice.

- 8.6. The evidence indicates that Mr Strande lacks the knowledge and expertise to determine whether the herbs he prescribes and provides to clients may have adverse reactions with their prescribed medications. Mr Strande informed the Commission that he conducts "google searches" to check for contraindications and he admitted that he does not consult with the client's treating doctor, instead relying on the patient to check with their doctor "*what is permissible or not permissible*". This approach transfers the onus to the patient to determine whether the treatment he is providing may be harmful and is wholly inappropriate for a practitioner who holds himself out to be an expert in treating serious illnesses.
- 8.7. Given Mr Strande has been unable to produce his clinical records for Persons, C, D, E and F, the Commission has not delved into the appropriateness of the care and treatment provided by Mr Strande to these clients and also in relation to Person A. Nevertheless, the Commission accepts evidence from Persons A, C, D, E and F insofar as it relates to Mr Strande's failure to provide information regarding the herbal medicines and Mr Strande's actions in pressuring his clients to continue treatment with him despite their complaints of adverse side effects. This is a consistent theme that is apparent in evidence from Persons A, C, D, E and F, who have no connection with each other. This is also apparent in phone and email communications between Mr Strande and many other clients.
- 8.8. The Commission has concerns that Mr Strande is not willing to seriously reflect on his practice and has no insight into the limitations of his training and qualifications and his competence to treat serious illnesses. Mr Strande's lack of insight, coupled with his dishonesty and misplaced confidence in his abilities as a health practitioner render him a significant risk to the health and safety of the public.
- 8.9. Despite being reminded of his professional obligations under the Code of Conduct by the Commission in November 2018, the Commission notes that Mr Strande has continued to completely disregard the principles that underpin the Code of Conduct. During the course of the search warrant, Mr Strande confirmed that he was unaware that he was required to display the Code of Conduct in his consulting rooms, together with information as to how to make a complaint to the Commission (Tab 34).

Breach of the Code of Conduct and risk to public health and safety

- 8.10. Based on the findings and determinations set out above, the Commission finds that Mr Strande breached the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Practitioners by:
 - 8.10.1. failing to provide health services in a safe and ethical manner (Clause 3(1)) by:
 - 8.10.1.1. providing services that are outside his experience and that he is not qualified to provide and failing to recognise the limitation of the treatment he can provide and failing to refer clients to other competent health practitioners in appropriate circumstances. Clauses 3(2)(b)(c)&(f)
 - 8.10.1.2. not having a sound understanding of any adverse interactions between the therapies and treatments he provides and any other

Health Care Complaints Commission

medications that the health practitioner is aware that the client is taking Clauses 3(2)(j)

- 8.10.2. holding himself out as qualified, able or willing to cure cancer (Clause 5(1))
 - 8.10.3. engaging in misinformation and misrepresentation in relation to the products or services he provides (Clause 12(1))
 - 8.10.4. making claims about the efficacy of treatment provided when those claims cannot be substantiated (Clause 12(3))
 - 8.10.5. dissuading clients from seeking or continuing with treatment by a registered medical practitioner (Clause 7(1))
 - 8.10.6. financially exploiting clients by providing treatment that is not designed to maintain or improve the client's health and wellbeing (Clause 10(3))
 - 8.10.7. failing to maintain and keep appropriate records (Clause 15)
 - 8.10.8. failing to display the Code of Conduct and information about the way in which clients may make a complaint to the Commission at his business premises (Clause 17).
- 8.11. Due to the nature of the breaches of the Code and his limited insight into his limitations as a practitioner, the Commission finds that Mr Strande poses a risk to the health and safety of members of the public as a naturopath.

9. Proposed Decision

- 9.1. Based on the available evidence set out above the Commission proposes to determine that Mr Strande has breached the Code of Conduct and that his conduct poses a risk to the health and safety of members of the public. Accordingly, the Commission proposes to make the following prohibition order under section 41A(2)(a) of the *Health Care Complaints Act 1993* ('the Act'):

Mr Strande is permanently prohibited from providing any health services, as defined in s4. of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993 (the Act), whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.

- 9.2. The Commission proposes to issue the following public statement under section 41A(2)(b) if the Act:

The NSW Health Care Complaints Commission conducted an investigation into the professional conduct of Mr Aleksander Strande, also known as 'Alex Maestro', 'Aleksander Wieslaw Strande Kowlowski', "Aleksander-Wieslaw-Strande-Kozlowski", 'Alex Strand'. 'Aleks' and 'Ale', an unregistered health practitioner who provides services as a naturopath.

The complaints under investigation raised concerns regarding Mr Strande's qualifications, dubious claims published by Mr Strande's website and the care and treatment Mr Strande provided to several patients.

Health Care Complaints Commission

The Commission's investigation found that Mr Strande has wilfully misrepresented the level of his qualifications. Mr Strande has falsely claimed to hold post graduate qualifications at a master's level in clinical nutrition, herbal medicine and homeopathy. Mr Strande, in fact, has diplomas in herbal medicine and homeopathy and a post-graduate diploma in clinical nutrition.

The Commission's investigation found that Mr Strande has made dangerous health claims on his business website regarding his ability to cure complex medical conditions including cancer, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and hepatitis. Further, Mr Strande portrays himself as superior to mainstream health care practitioners and encourages his clients to forgo prescribed medications and adopt his treatment regime. The misinformation promoted by Mr Strande has huge potential to have a detrimental effect on the health of vulnerable individuals suffering from these conditions.

The Commission obtained evidence of Mr Strande's treatment to five clients. Evidence from Persons A, C, D, E and F (who are all unknown to each other) is remarkably consistent in relation to Mr Strande's failure to provide information regarding the herbal medicines (including its ingredients and risks of side effects) and Mr Strande's actions in pressuring his clients to continue treatment with him despite their complaints of adverse side effects.

The Commission has concerns that Mr Strande is not willing to seriously reflect on his practice and has no insight into the limitations of his training and qualifications and his competence to treat serious illnesses. Mr Strande's lack of insight, coupled with his dishonesty and misplaced confidence in his abilities as a health practitioner renders him as a significant risk to the health and safety of the public.

On the basis of the above evidence the Commission found that Mr Strande has breached the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Practitioners in that he:

- Failed to provide a health service in a safe and ethical manner
- Held himself out as able to cure cancer
- Dissuaded clients from seeking or continuing treatment by a registered medical practitioner
- Engaged in misinformation in relation to the services he provides
- Failed to keep records of consultations

The Commission therefore makes the following prohibition order:

Mr Strande is permanently prohibited from providing any health services, as defined in s4. of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993 (the Act), whether in a paid or voluntary capacity.

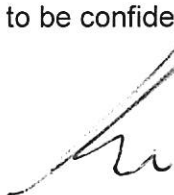
- 9.3. The Commission has determined to make this Statement of Decision publicly available as per section 41B(3)(c) of the Act.
- 9.4. As required under section 41D of the Act, the Commission will provide a copy of this Statement of Decision to the following organisations:
 - Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA);
 - Each professional Council in NSW.

Health Care Complaints Commission

9.5. As provided for under section 41B(3)(b) the Commission will provide a copy of this Statement of Decision to the following professional associations: the Australian Natural Therapists Association; the Naturopaths Association of Australia; Australian Homeopathic Association and the Australia Committee of Natural Therapies.

10. Section 41B(5) of the Health Care Complaints Act 1993

10.1. The Commission has removed from this Statement of Decision material which it considers to be confidential information.



Tony Kofkin
Executive Director, Complaints Operations
Health Care Complaints Commission
19 September 2019