

9th June 2013

Executive Officer
National Board of Australia
AHPRA
GPO Box 9958
Melbourne 3001

Dear Sir/Madam

I have heard with some concern that Dental therapists, with relatively minimal training of one to two years are to be let loose on population and legally allowed to provide dental services presently only provided by fully qualified dentists who have completed 5 -7 years of training.

To me this appears to be the height of insanity and mirrors what happens with often very poor results in my own field of expertise – power systems electrical engineering.

I am a fully qualified professional engineer with over 40 years of experience and have owned and run one of the bigger medium sized consulting engineering practices in the country (TYP Pty Ltd), now part of the Worley Parsons Group.

A significant part of my time was involved investigating and fixing design and installation errors made by unqualified engineers whose engineering expertise consisted of a lot of confidence and the ownership of design software (often illegally obtained). Generally the confidence is almost always exceeded by their ignorance and lack of experience.

Apart from Civil engineering sign offs there are no regulations and anyone at all can call themselves an “engineer” of whatever type they wish. Even electricians need to be licensed but not “electrical engineers”.

The saving grace with most these engineers is that are working for like minded “cowboys” and their errors create operational issues and do not initially at least cause suffering or injury, directly to people unlike the potential that is being introduced with the unsupervised dental therapist proposal.

I can only hope that the information I have heard is incorrect and that dental therapists will not be allowed unsupervised access to patients.

If they are I can already see the tabloid headlines, and the lawyers getting their dental section practice expanded and ready - Patient oral cancer not diagnosed by unsupervised dental therapist claiming he / she had all the necessary skills etc ,etc. Bad publicity, lots of money for the usual legal sharks that is about it will achieve.

Perhaps the insurance premiums will eventually make this mad idea unworkable.

Tom Tyler BE, FIE (Aust)

