

## Guidance for registered dental practitioners: Obligations regarding use of title

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	<b>Why</b>	The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) has developed this fact sheet as part of its role to protect the public. All registered health practitioners should be careful about how they describe and advertise themselves to patients and the public to ensure they don't mislead anyone. This fact sheet will help you understand your obligations.
	<b>How</b>	You must take care when using a protected title and ensure you are registered in the relevant profession.
	<b>What</b>	You must be familiar with and comply with the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Health Practitioner Regulation National Law</a> (the National Law)</li><li>• <a href="#">Code of conduct</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service</a></li><li>• <a href="#">List of recognised specialties, related specialist titles and definitions</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Registration standard: endorsement for conscious sedation</a></li></ul>
	<b>Who</b>	The Board and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) work together to regulate dental practitioners.

### Why the Board developed this guidance

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#### **The National Law restricts the use of protected titles**

As part of its role to protect the public and regulate all registered dental practitioners, the Board publishes guidance, including [FAQs and fact sheets](#) such as this. All registered health practitioners should be careful about how they describe and advertise themselves to patients and the public to ensure they don't mislead anyone.

The National Law protects certain titles and provides that only registered practitioners may use those titles. Misuse of title can lead to prosecution and/or disciplinary action. This guidance explains the professional obligations regarding use of title and helps you understand how these obligations might apply to dental practitioners.

### How to comply

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#### **Follow regulatory and legal requirements**

The Board expects you to practise in line with the Board's regulatory standards, codes and guidelines by only using a protected title if you are registered in the relevant profession.

### What laws or regulations apply

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#### **The use of protected titles**

Under the National Law there are specific titles which are referred to as 'protected titles'. This means that only those people who are registered in a particular profession can use the titles associated with that profession.

The protected titles for dental practitioners are:

- dentist
- dental hygienist
- dental prosthetist
- dental therapist
- oral health therapist

You should ensure that you only use the protected title(s) for the division(s) you are registered in. If you are using a general title, for example, 'dental practitioner' you must ensure the way you describe yourself and your services does not mislead the public about the division(s) in which you hold registration.

It is important that patients understand and provide informed consent to the care they are receiving, which includes understanding the qualifications, skills and experience of the person providing the care. You can read more about informed consent in the Board's [Code of conduct](#).

### Use of the title 'Doctor'

Dental practitioners must be careful about how they use 'Doctor' or 'Dr' in their advertising because the public historically associates the term with medical practitioners. The [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service](#) (the guidelines) state that a dental practitioner who uses the title 'Doctor' or 'Dr' should make it clear that they are not registered as a medical practitioner by stating which division of the dental profession they are registered in. For example, 'Dr John Torre, dentist' or 'Dr Amara Collins, oral health therapist (PhD)'.

### The use of specialist titles

Practitioners must not use the title 'dental specialist' unless registered in the relevant [recognised speciality](#). Only practitioners registered in a recognised speciality may use the associated specialist title:

Specialty	Specialist titles
<b>Dento-maxillofacial radiology</b>	Dento-maxillofacial radiologist Oral and maxillofacial radiologist Dental radiologist
<b>Endodontics</b>	Endodontist
<b>Forensic odontology</b>	Forensic odontologist Forensic dentist
<b>Oral and maxillofacial surgery</b>	Oral and maxillofacial surgeon
<b>Oral medicine</b>	Specialist in oral medicine Oral medicine specialist
<b>Oral and maxillofacial pathology</b>	Oral and maxillofacial pathologist
<b>Oral surgery</b>	Oral surgeon
<b>Orthodontics</b>	Orthodontist
<b>Paediatric dentistry</b>	Specialist in paediatric dentistry Paediatric dentist Paedodontist
<b>Periodontics</b>	Periodontist
<b>Prosthodontics</b>	Prosthodontist
<b>Public health dentistry (Community dentistry)</b>	Specialist in public health dentistry
<b>Special needs dentistry</b>	Specialist in special needs dentistry

If you do not hold specialist registration, any advertising that uses the words, or variations of the words or phrases 'specialist', 'specialises in', 'specialty', or 'specialised' implies you hold specialist registration and is likely to mislead the public. You must also take care to ensure your services are not advertised in a way that leads members of the public to believe you are registered in one of these specialties if you are not.

## Endorsement in an area of practice

An endorsement of registration recognises that a practitioner has an extended scope of practice in a particular area because they have an additional qualification that is approved by the Board. The relevant area of practice endorsement in dentistry is the endorsement for conscious sedation.

You must not claim to hold an endorsement if you do not hold this type of registration.

### There are legal requirements, registration standards, codes and guidelines that apply

The National Law, the Board's codes, registration standards and guidelines set out the requirements:

<a href="#">The National Law</a>	The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), restricts the use of protected titles. You must be familiar with and comply with the National Law: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sections 113, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119 and 120</li><li>• section 133</li></ul>
<a href="#">Code of conduct</a>	The code describes the professional behaviour and conduct the Dental Board of Australia expects from all registered dental practitioners.
<a href="#">Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service</a>	The guidelines have been developed jointly by the National Boards to help practitioners and other advertisers understand their obligations when advertising a regulated health service.
<a href="#">List of recognised specialties, related specialist titles and definitions</a>	This list defines and describes the 13 recognised dental specialties.
<a href="#">Registration standard: endorsement for conscious sedation</a>	This registration standard sets out the minimum requirements of the Dental Board of Australia for endorsement of registration for conscious sedation.

## Reporting concerns

If you have concerns about the advertising of a registered health practitioner or the advertising of a regulated health service, you can report these. More information is available on [Ahpra's advertising complaints page](#).

## Who is involved

### The Board and Ahpra regulate the use of title

The Board works with Ahpra and the other National Boards to implement the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme under the National Law. Its core role is to protect the public by regulating registered dental practitioners in Australia.

The Board:

- registers dental practitioners and students
- sets professional standards
- manages complaints about practitioners' health, conduct or performance
- publishes guidance to help practitioners meet registration requirements and professional obligations

The Board's guidance may relate to a specific topic and refer to laws or other regulations where relevant. The Board does not issue clinical practice guidelines about managing specific conditions because it expects practitioners to determine the best care for their patients.

This fact sheet will be reviewed as needed, but generally every three years.