

Welcome to the Dental Board of Australia's May 2017 newsletter.

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News from the Board

Dental regulation at work: Protecting the public in 2015/16

A profession-specific annual report summary that looks into the work of the Dental Board of Australia over the year to 30 June 2016 has recently been published.

The report draws on data from the [2015/16 annual report](#) by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards.

Information includes the number of applications for registration, outcomes of criminal history checks and segmentation of the registrant base by gender, age, division and principal place of practice.

Notifications information includes the number of complaints or concerns received, matters open and closed during the year, statutory offence complaints (such as advertising breaches) and matters that required immediate action.

Insights into the profession include:

- As at 30 June 2016, there were 21,741 registered dental practitioners in Australia.
- Dental practitioners made up 3.3% of all registered health practitioners.
- Women made up 49% of the profession.
- New South Wales was the principal place of practice for most dental practitioners (6,580); the Northern Territory was home to the least (153).
- The age bracket with the most practitioners was 30-34 (3,321 registrants).
- 827 dental practitioners were under 25 years of age; 59 were aged 80 or over.
- The total number of registered dental students increased by 2.1% compared to 2014/15 (to 4,810).
- As part of the registration process, 1,992 criminal history checks were carried out. Of 96 disclosable court outcomes, one required regulatory action.
- 1,025 notifications (complaints or concerns) were lodged with AHPRA about dental practitioners during the year.
- 196 matters were raised about possible statutory offences relating to dental services in 2015/16 – almost all new matters related to the use of protected titles or advertising concerns.

To download this report, or to view the main 2015/16 annual report and summary reports by state or territory, visit the [annual report microsite](#).

Video for dental practitioners

The Board has launched a video for dental practitioners: *An overview of your obligations as a registered dental practitioner.*

As the regulator of dental practitioners, one of the Board's objectives is to keep the public safe by ensuring that only dental practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered. The Board has in place specific standards, policies, guidelines and a code in order to achieve this objective.

The video provides an overview of the dental practitioners' obligations described in the Board's standards, policies, guidelines and code. It highlights some of the main requirements for dental practitioners to maintain registration and provides guidance to dental practitioners on expected behaviours.

It is important to note that the video does not cover all the details of the requirements, so you should check the Board's website for further details at www.dentalboard.gov.au.

You can view the video on the [Board's website](#) or on AHPRA's [Vimeo](#) and [YouTube](#) channels.

Update on programs to extend scope

Late last year, the Australian Dental Council (ADC) reviewed the list of [Programs to extend scope](#) on behalf of the Board. As an outcome of this review process, the Board has re-approved seven programs to extend scope until 31 December 2018. The list of approved programs has been updated on the [Accreditation section](#) of the Board's website.

The Board has also reviewed its role in approving these programs and decided to phase out the approval process with a transition period from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2018. During and after this transition period, the Board will no longer approve programs to extend scope and consequently, the ADC will no longer accredit these programs.

The Board made this decision considering a number of factors:

- The National Law¹ only provides a regulatory framework to approve programs of study that lead to registration. Programs to extend scope do not lead to registration and are offered to dental practitioners already registered with general or limited registration.
- The need for these programs has reduced, with a decrease in the demand for them and the fact that most of these topics are now incorporated in the programs of study already approved by the Board.
- The objectives, the guiding principles and the [Regulatory principles of the National Scheme](#).

Programs to extend scope can continue to be delivered as continuing professional development (CPD) programs. We remind dental practitioners that CPD programs alone cannot be used to increase scope and may not provide you with the sufficient clinical experience to incorporate techniques and procedures into your practice.

Registered dental practitioners are responsible for selecting CPD programs that:

- relate to the definition of their practice as defined in the Board's [Scope of practice guidelines](#), and
- 'broaden knowledge, expertise and competence' in accordance with the Board's [Continuing professional development registration standard](#) and [guidelines](#).

Scheduled review of Scope of practice registration standard and Guidelines for scope of practice

Programs to extend scope are currently defined in the Board's [Scope of practice registration standard](#) and associated [guidelines](#).

The Board has begun planning for the scheduled review of the standard and guidelines, which refer to the approval of programs to extend scope. As part of this review and in line with our obligations under the National Law, we will consult all stakeholders including education providers and provide regular updates through our communication channels, such as our communiqué and newsletter.

Updated information for dental hygienists, dental therapists and oral health therapists

The Board has updated information for dental hygienists, dental therapists and oral health therapists, including frequently asked questions (FAQ).

The webpages now include information covering use of protected titles, transition from dental hygienist and dental therapist into oral health therapist, and registration in multiple divisions and meeting registration standards.

The out-of-date *Registration as an oral health therapist fact sheet* has been removed from the website.

Read more on the [Dental hygienist, dental therapist and oral health therapist page](#).

Specialist registration in oral surgery and forensic odontology – new programs approved

The Board has approved two new [programs of study](#) – the University of Sydney's Doctor of Clinical Dentistry (Oral Surgery) program and the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia's Fellowship of the Faculty of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology (Fellowship in Forensic Odontology program).

Since the start of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) there has been no approved program of study leading to specialist registration in oral surgery or forensic odontology.

As a result of this approval, the [Qualification equivalence pathway](#) for specialist registration is now available for applicants who hold a qualification not approved by the Board (such as an overseas qualification) in the oral surgery and forensic odontology specialty.

Entry-level competencies for endorsement for conscious sedation

The Board has published [entry-level competencies](#) expected of applicants for endorsement of registration in the conscious sedation area of practice.

Dentists who apply for endorsement of registration for conscious sedation will already have the competencies of a graduate dentist, which are outlined in the *Professional competencies of the newly qualified dentist* developed by the [Australian Dental Council](#).

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

Regulatory action – tribunal cases

A number of recent regulatory actions by the Board have achieved greater protection of the public.

Significant outcomes include:

- A dental practitioner has been disqualified for two years and six months and ordered to pay the Board's costs fixed at \$90,000, after a tribunal found him guilty of professional misconduct and unprofessional conduct. [Read the full news item.](#)
- A dental practitioner has been reprimanded and had her registration suspended for professional misconduct. [Read the full news item.](#)
- A school dental therapist has had her registration cancelled after acting outside her scope of practice and providing inadequate or inappropriate treatment over a seven-year period. [Read the full news item.](#)

You can find out more about the outcomes of court and tribunal action on the Board's website – see the [News section](#). You can also visit AHPRA's website, where there is a page dedicated to court and tribunal outcomes under [Publications and resources](#).

Responsible advertising of health services: Practitioners reminded about their legal obligations

Registered health practitioners are reminded to **check, correct** and **comply** with their professional and legal advertising obligations.

The National Boards and AHPRA have published a strategy for the National Scheme to help keep health service consumers safe from misleading advertising.

The [Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy for the National Scheme](#) explains how National Boards and AHPRA will manage advertising complaints and compliance, including the regulatory powers available to deal with breaches of the National Law.

Practitioners have a professional and legal obligation to advertise responsibly and support members of the community to make informed choices about their healthcare. The National Law limits how regulated health services² can be advertised.

When preparing advertising, you should always ensure that your advertising is not false, misleading or deceptive in any way. You are encouraged to use the resources available on AHPRA's website to **check** and, if necessary, **correct** your advertising to ensure you **comply** with National Law requirements.

This strategy builds on the previous education and enforcement work from National Boards and AHPRA.

Under the National Law, a regulated health service or a business providing a regulated health service must not advertise in a way that:

- is false, misleading or deceptive
- uses gifts, discounts or inducements without explaining the terms and conditions of the offer

- uses a testimonial or a purported testimonial
- creates an unreasonable expectation of beneficial treatment, and/or
- directly or indirectly encourages the indiscriminate or unnecessary use of regulated health services.

There are also restrictions on advertising in a way that identifies a health practitioner as a specialist when they do not hold registration as a specialist or as an endorsed practitioner in a health profession.

More information, including the strategy and examples of unacceptable statements in advertising, is available on the [Advertising resources](#) section of the [AHPRA website](#).

AHPRA's regulatory role means it may need to take action for non-compliant advertising. If you are unsure about whether or not your advertising complies with the National Law you should seek advice from your:

- professional association
- insurer, and/or
- an independent legal adviser.

New legislation for the regulation of medicines and poisons in Western Australia

New legislation for the regulation of medicines and poisons in Western Australia came into effect on Monday 30 January 2017.

The [Medicines and Poisons Act 2014](#) and its subsidiary legislation, the [Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016](#), contain a number of key reforms for health practitioners handling medicines and businesses using poisons. The new laws will replace the current *Poisons Act 1964* and *Poisons Regulations 1965*.

An awareness campaign explaining how the new legislation will affect practitioners has started and resources, including a collection of *Guidance notes* providing detailed information on various topics, have been published on the [WA Health website](#).

Dental practitioner audit

Dental practitioner audits are an important part of the way the National Board can better protect the public. They help to ensure that practitioners are meeting the mandatory registrations standards and provide important assurance to the community and the Boards.

Audits of random samples of dental practitioners will occur periodically throughout the coming year. If you are selected for audit, you will receive an audit notice in the mail from AHPRA. It includes a checklist that outlines what supporting documentation is required to demonstrate that you meet the standard(s) being audited.

Further information has been published on our website under the [Registration tab](#) to keep dental practitioners informed and provide information and tools to help practitioners who are selected for audit.

² A 'regulated health service' is a service provided by, or usually provided by, a health practitioner, as defined in the National Law. The advertising provisions of the National Law cover the advertising of a regulated health service, or the advertising of a business that provides a regulated health service.

National Scheme news

AHPRA performance reports October-December 2016

The October to December 2016 quarterly performance reports for AHPRA and the National Boards are available online.

The reports, which are part of an ongoing drive by AHPRA and the National Boards to increase their accountability and transparency, include data specific to each state and territory.

Each report covers AHPRA and the National Boards' main areas of activity:

- managing applications for registration as a health practitioner
- managing notifications about the health, performance and conduct of registered health practitioners and offences against the National Law, and
- monitoring health practitioners and students with restrictions on their registration.

The reports are available on the AHPRA [Statistics page](#).

National health workforce dataset – Allied health fact sheets 2015

AHPRA in conjunction with the National Boards is responsible for the national registration process for 14 health professions. A subset of data from this annual registration process, together with data from a workforce survey that is voluntarily completed at the time of registration, forms the National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS).

The NHWDS includes demographic and professional practice information for registered health professionals and is de-identified before it can be made publicly available.

The NHWDS Allied Health 2015 data has recently been released as a series of fact sheets on each allied health profession, and on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners across all allied health professions – *the NHWDS allied health fact sheets 2015*. They were published on a new-look website – the [Health Workforce Data website](#) – by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

The fact sheets present information specific to each profession, such as information relating to scope of practice, specialties and endorsements where applicable.

Aggregate data is also accessible via the [Health Workforce Data online data tool \(ODT\)](#).

The data included is generated through workforce surveys, which are provided by AHPRA on behalf of the Department of Health to all health professionals as part of their yearly renewal of registration. Each survey is slightly different and is tailored to obtain data specific to that profession.

A fact sheet on dental practitioners is available on the [HWA website](#).

AHPRA online portal for complaints or concerns launches

AHPRA has launched a [new online portal](#) to the public offering a clearer and simpler process when making a complaint or raising a concern about registered health practitioners and students.

The portal is an additional channel available through the AHPRA website. Alternatively, individuals can still call 1300 419 495 to make a complaint or raise a concern, while a PDF form also remains available for complainants.

The same standard applies to information and evidence regardless of whether the concern is raised online or by email, phone or form. The portal includes the requirement for a complainant to declare that the information provided in a complaint or concern is true and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief.

The online portal guides users to provide information that more readily enables proper assessment of their concerns. Automated correspondence is issued to all users of the portal, including a copy of their complaint or concern and advice that they will be contacted by a member of the AHPRA team within four days.

The portal is supported by website content about the way AHPRA manages complaints or concerns about health practitioners and students. Consultations revealed the term 'notification' is not commonly understood by the broader community. In response the term 'complaint or concern' replaces the term 'notification' in the portal and the website content.

COAG Health Council Meeting communiqué

The federal and state and territory health ministers met in Melbourne on 24 March 2017 at the [COAG Health Council](#) to discuss a range of national health issues. The meeting was chaired by the Victorian Minister for Health, the Hon. Jill Hennessy MP.

AHPRA's CEO attended the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Council) meeting, which brings together all health ministers throughout Australia to provide oversight for the work of the National Accreditation and Registration Scheme (the National Scheme). AHPRA and National Boards provide a regular update to the Council on our work.

This meeting had a particular focus on the progress of amendments to the National Law which, among other things, will pave the way for the registration of paramedics from 2018. There has been a call for expressions of interest and nominations for first appointments to the National Board prior to this.

Ministers also discussed further amendments to the National Law to increase the penalties for people holding out as registered practitioners.

The Council produces a communiqué from its meeting which can be accessed on [AHPRA's website](#).

Keep in touch with the Board

- As always, we encourage you to regularly check the [Dental Board website](#) for information and updates relating to the dental profession.
- Visit our website for information on the National Scheme and for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets. Board communiqués and consultation papers are published on the site under [News](#).
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (for overseas callers).
- AHPRA state and territory office locations are listed on the [AHPRA website](#).

