



Communiqué

Eighteenth meeting of the Dental Board of Australia – 29 April 2011

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (National Law) as in force in each state and territory.

This communiqué highlights key issues from the Board's last meeting. At this meeting, the Board considered a wide range of issues including the Senate Inquiry into the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), the response to the Board's recent consultation on guidelines and standards, the definition of 'practice' and updates on the student registration process, the registration of overseas trained dental hygienists, dental therapists and oral health therapists and the accreditation of dental prosthetist courses in Australia.

Senate Committee on Finance and Public Administration Inquiry on the administration of health practitioner registration by AHPRA ('Senate Inquiry')

The Board noted that the Senate Committee is holding an inquiry into the transition to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme). The Senate Inquiry is about the administration of health practitioner registration by AHPRA and related matters.

Submissions to the Senate Inquiry are publicly available on the Parliament of Australia website at www.aph.gov.au.

The AHPRA submission describes the complexity of implementing the National Scheme and recognises that the significant transitional challenges have led to some initial shortfalls in services to health professionals. The submission also describes the actions taken to address problems and concludes that despite the challenges of the early implementation phase, the benefits of National Registration are now being realised. The Chairs of the 10 National Boards have also written collectively to express their support for AHPRA and its submission to the Senate Inquiry.

The Board thanks all dental practitioner related organisations which have made submissions to the Senate Inquiry. The Board has considered these submissions with interest.

Consultation on the Supervision Guidelines, section 53(b) and Limited Registration - Registration Standards

The Board would like to thank all key stakeholders and dental practitioners who responded to this consultation. The Board has commenced its review of the consultation feedback. The finalised Supervision Guidelines, section 53(b) and Limited Registration – Registration Standards will be published in the upcoming months on the website.

The definition of 'practice'

The Board considered a paper on the definition of 'practice'. The definition – which is currently contained in a number of registration standards that have been approved by the Ministerial Council - has resulted in difficulties for some practitioners. The Board acknowledges the concern raised from the current very

broad definition of 'practice' that arguably includes any activity in which a dental practitioner uses their professional knowledge.

The paper will be modified on the basis of feedback from the 10 National Boards and will be the subject of wide consultation in the next few months.

Student registration

From March 2011, all students enrolled in a Board approved program were required to be registered by the Board. At this meeting, the Board received an update on student registration.

Unlike the Register of Dental Practitioners and the Specialists Register, under the National Law the Register of Students is not publicly available.

The role of the Board in relation to dental practitioner students is limited by the National Law. The Board has no role to play in the academic progress of students, nor in their professional conduct. The Board's role is limited to:

- registering students
- dealing with notifications about students whose health is impaired to such a degree that there may be a risk to the public and
- dealing with students who are found guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment for 12 months or more.

The Board is grateful to all education providers in enabling the progress of student registration.

Registration for overseas trained dental hygienists, dental therapists and oral health therapists

Dental hygienists and dental therapists who are registered to practice in New Zealand under Trans Tasman mutual recognition

Dental hygienists and dental therapists who are registered to practice in New Zealand are eligible to apply for General Registration under Trans Tasman mutual recognition (this applies irrespective of where training was undertaken). To apply please complete the Application for Trans Tasman recognition as a Dental Practitioner Form which is available at www.dentalboard.gov.au/Forms.aspx.

Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists and Oral Health Therapists with overseas of other qualifications

If qualifications do not meet requirements for registration to practise in Australia, there are two options available:

- complete an Australian qualification (a list of Board approved qualifications can be found on the Board's website) or
- undertake the assessment process overseen by the Australian Dental Council (ADC).

Information about this pathway to registration in Australia for overseas qualified practitioners can be found by following the Assessment for Overseas Qualified Professionals link on the ADC website (www.adc.org.au).

Accreditation of dental prosthetist courses

The Australian Dental Council has submitted a proposal for project funding for the accreditation of dental prosthetist courses throughout Australia. The proposal was approved by the Board. The project is inclusive of the development of accreditation standards and an accreditation process for dental prosthetist courses. The ADC has commenced work on the project.

Health Workforce Australia's (HWA) Scope of Practice review

At this meeting the Board was given a report from the recent HWA's Expert Reference Group meeting which was established to provide input into the HWA's review of the scope of practice of dental therapists and dental hygienists. The Board will work collaboratively with the HWA as the Board undertakes its review requested by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. The Board's review seeks to formally assess whether the Board's Registration Standard has had any *unintended and negative impacts* on the scope of practice of oral health therapists, dental therapists and dental hygienists.

Guidelines on Infection Control (the Guidelines)

The Board has now replaced the superseded Infection Control Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Infectious Diseases in the Health care setting with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) publication Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (first published in 2010). The Guidelines have been updated with this change at paragraph 1.1 (c) and in the References.

Website and receiving important information by email

Further information about the Board can be found on the Board's website at: www.dentalboard.gov.au and practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on Policy and Guidelines affecting dental practitioners.

The Board encourages all dental practitioners to provide AHPRA with a current email contact address by updating their contact details through online services. This will enable AHPRA to contact dental practitioners about important registration information and the National Board to contact dental practitioners with important updates for the profession.

John Lockwood
Chair, Dental Board of Australia
09 May 2011