

## Communique

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Notifications workshop with the Australian Dental Association, the Dental Board of Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency held on 21 July 2017

Senior leaders from the Dental Board of Australia (the Board), the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Australian Dental Association (ADA) met on 21 July 2017. The workshop focused on building a joint understanding of how notifications are managed in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

### Understanding the notification process

All participants acknowledged that the notifications (complaints) process has an important role in protecting the public and in promoting confidence in the dental profession.

ADA participants welcomed the opportunity to further understand the notifications process. Highlights included how notifications are assessed and managed according to risk, and that the Board's local decision-making committees, consisting of dental practitioners and community members, make the decisions about dental notifications.

The Board and AHPRA acknowledged that the length of time it can take to complete a notification has been an area of concern for the ADA. While some notifications are considered complex the general view is that the notification process has been taking too long.

AHPRA has made a number of changes to the way it works to enable early and effective assessment of risks to the public when it receives a notification. AHPRA also continues to work towards reducing the length of time it takes to investigate a notification.

The ADA was pleased to learn about recent improvements and acknowledged the willingness of the Board and AHPRA to respond to their concerns through ongoing dialogue.

### Experience of practitioners

The ADA provided very clear advice to the Board and AHPRA about the effects of notifications on individual practitioners.

The Board and AHPRA acknowledged that despite the fact that around 70 per cent of notifications result in no regulatory action, many practitioners regard being the subject of a notification as a catastrophic event and view the process as very stressful.

The Board and AHPRA are taking steps to improve the experience for practitioners who are subject to a notification. One of the recent initiatives highlighted at the workshop was the introduction of an ongoing survey of practitioners who have been the subject of a notification, which seeks their feedback on accessibility, responsiveness, transparency, timeliness and fairness.

While the results have helped to make improvements to the practitioner experience, there remain a number of areas for ongoing focus. These include the need for more information and updates for the practitioner involved during the process and the overall management of the process and satisfaction with the outcome.

### **Advertising compliance**

Participants were also updated on the new [Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy](#), which explains how National Boards and AHPRA manage advertising complaints and compliance, including the regulatory powers available to deal with breaches of the National Law<sup>1</sup>.

The ADA acknowledged that dentists have a professional and legal obligation to advertise responsibly and welcomed the new approach and education [resources](#). It did express concern with the letters sent to practitioners about advertising breaches.

The Board and AHPRA welcomed feedback from the ADA about the implementation of the strategy and improvements to the letters practitioners received from AHPRA about non-compliant advertising.

### **Summary**

The ADA commended the Board and AHPRA on their willingness to listen to concerns and seek feedback.

All participants valued the opportunity to contribute to strengthening the notification process with a number of actions agreed including the opportunity for the ADA to review the letters sent to practitioners subject to a notification.

The Board was represented by Dr John Lockwood AM, Chair of the Board, Dr Murray Thomas, practitioner member and Mr Robin Brown, community member.

AHPRA was represented by Martin Fletcher, CEO of AHPRA, Kym Ayscough, Executive Director – Regulatory Operations, Matthew Hardy, National Director of Notifications, Jim O’Dempsey, National Director of Compliance and other senior AHPRA staff.

The ADA was represented by Dr Hugo Sachs, President, ADA, Mr Damian Mitsch, CEO, ADA, Ms Eithne Irvine, Deputy CEO, ADA, Dr Sabrina Manickam, ADA New South Wales, Mr Phil Breen, ADA New South Wales, Dr Susan Wise, ADA Victoria, Dr Di Evans, ADA Victoria, Dr Samantha Mead, ADA South Australia, Dr Alan Broughton, ADA South Australia, Dr Ralph Kelsey, ADA Queensland, Mr Paul Andrews, ADA Queensland, Dr Errol Kilov, ADA Tasmania, Dr Len Crocombe, ADA Tasmania and Dr Ashley Freeman, ADA North Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).