To whom it may concern,

I would like to express my great concern regarding the proposed changes to the scope of practice for Oral Therapist and hygienist. The prerequisite for a dental registration to practice as a dentist has always been that you must have a Bachelor of Dental Surgery or B.D. Sc., the proper qualification in order to practice as a dentist. I fear that without the theoretical and practical training that this increase in the supporting dental team’s scope of practice will put the public’s health in great danger. The proper training for a dentist was five years and now in some states, it is seven years, there is a reason for the course to be that long, to provide the foundation both theoretical and practical required to provide the appropriate treatment to the public. One of the most important skills as a dentist is able to assess risks and foreseen potential complications and hopefully preventing them and if they do occur then be able to mange the complications. I must emphasize that the OHT and hygienist do not have the proper training behind them to be qualified to perform the procedures proposed. Their inability to make the correct diagnosis and lack of skills to manage patients’ complete oral health will be detrimental to the public’s welfare. If the dental supporting team would like to extend their scope of practice then appropriate degree should be undertaken so they can be accredited as dentists. For example, a radiology technician can not practice as a radiologist and a pharmacy technician is not a pharmacist! To support the dental team by increasing unqualified personnel’s scope of practice does NOT solve the problem, but it will increase unnecessary complications.

As some of the OTH and hygienist have practiced outside of their scope of practice putting the public’s health in danger, we should be more restrictive in assessing their scope of practice and not to encourage them by allowing them to practice on patients outside what their course have trained them for!
As a country like Australia where healthcare is paramount to the Health Board, how can this proposal be considered? After having spoken to many colleagues and professionals alike, and members of the public, we are all appalled that this proposal even exist!

Yours sincerely

Dr Sue Huang B.D.S.