

The DBA will define all dentists, dental therapists, hygienists, oral health therapists and prosthetists as 'dental practitioners'.

'Dental practitioners' will be able to practice on patients of all ages, in a range of dental procedures, so long as they have been formally educated and trained in this procedure - this may include short workshops post graduation for non-dentists. It is not unreasonable to imagine that under these new regulations therapists and hygienists may soon be performing treatment that is currently the realm of only dentists.

To put this in context, the longest Dental Therapy degree is a 2 year degree (3 if combined with hygiene), and The University of Newcastle is offering a 1 year Dental Therapy Grad Dip (source Health Workforce Australia report p88). So after one year of training, Dental Therapists may be able to treat adults without supervision. This is a potential public safety issue.

The public will have a hard time knowing who is a dentist, and who is a "dental practitioner". We need to protect the title of 'dentist' from being equated with other oral health professionals.

Hygienists, therapists and prosthetists are an important part of a multi-disciplinary dental team and are extremely skilled and capable in those areas of dentistry in which they have been trained. However, deregulating our profession is not the right way to achieve our professional and workforce goals. Hygienists, therapists and prosthetists are roles created to address a specific need in the community, particularly on a public health level, and deregulating these professions negates the specific reasons for which these roles were created.

opening the door to these types of changes can have a negative influence that once instated, cannot be removed

yours truly,
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