

Media release

November 2011

First national dental data released

The first ever national data on dental practice is now available with the release of the Dental Board of Australia's information in the AHPRA and National Boards' annual report

Dental practitioners in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia are more likely to be female, despite the profession having a larger number of male practitioners overall, with the 'typical' dental practitioner aged 30 to 34 years and practising in New South Wales.

The release of the 2010-11 annual report of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards gives an essential, first-ever insight into Australia's 530,115 health practitioners across 10 professions regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

As well as profiling the professions and practitioners, the report provides the first national data on notifications (complaints) involving health practitioners and the actions taken by National Boards to protect public safety.

Important information for the dental profession include:

- There are 18,319 dental practitioners registered to practise in Australia, comprising; dental hygienists, dental therapists, oral health therapists, dental prosthetists, dentists and dental specialists. Dental practice represents 3.5% of the total number of registered health practitioners.
- Of all dental practitioners, the largest group was aged 30 to 34 years (2,609 dental practitioners, or more than 14% of the profession), followed by practitioners aged 50 to 54 years (2,333 dental practitioners) and those aged 25 to 29 years (2,231 dental practitioners). There were 163 practitioners aged 80-plus years, 120 aged 75 to 79 years (120 dental practitioners).
- There are more male dental practitioners than female - 9,329 male practitioners or 51% of the profession
- There are 64 dental practitioners in Australia with an endorsement on registration for conscious sedation, 48 practising in New South Wales (see www.dentalboard.gov.au under Registration Standards for more information)
- There are 1,520 dental practitioners with specialist registration
- There were 3,028 students of dental practice registered from April 2011, representing 3% of all registered students across the regulated health professions
- There were 8,139 notifications received about health practitioners in 2010-11, of which 1,322 related to dental practitioners. The largest group of notifications relating to dental practice was received in New

South Wales (669 notifications). These are managed through separate health professional councils and/or the Health Care Complaints Commission in that state*.

- There was one mandatory notification made in relation to a registered dental practitioner

The New South Wales (NSW) government, in the lead up to the National Registration and Accreditation scheme (NRAS), agreed to retain the existing legislative framework for the management of complaints about health practitioners in NSW. The principle of **public protection** is paramount in both the national scheme and the NSW models of managing complaints/notifications; however the process and roles of the Councils, Boards, Health Complaints Entities (HCEs) and Health Care Complaints Commission vary.

The annual report includes the complaints/notifications made in the first year of the scheme, as well as the matters that transitioned into the national scheme on 1 July 2010 which were being managed by the previous state and territory dental boards before 1 July 2010. These 'legacy' matters are now being managed by the Dental Board's Registration and Notification Committees in each state and territory, except in NSW where a different legal framework exists.

Due to the variation in the laws that existed in the states and territories before 1 July 2010 (and for Western Australian 18 October 2010), it has not been possible to analyse in detail the outcome of matters that transitioned into the national scheme and were resolved in the reporting year. Detailed data on notifications received since 1 July 2010 are presented in the annual report.

Given the differences in notifications management in NSW and other states and territories, some of the data in the annual report in relation to complaints/notifications may not be directly comparable between NSW and the rest of Australia, without examining further detail. However, the management of serious professional misconduct is managed with the utmost respect and consistently across Australia.

Under the national scheme, for the first time, dental practitioners in Australia are regulated by a consistent set of registration standards, codes and guidelines including:

- Dental Code of Conduct
- Dental Guidelines for Mandatory Notifications
- Dental Guidelines on Dental Records
- Dental Guidelines on Infection Control and
- Dental Guidelines for Advertising of Regulated Health Services.

All of these documents are published on Dental Board's website www.dentalboard.gov.au.

Chair of the Dental Board of Australia, Dr John Lockwood AM said the 2010-11 annual report demonstrated transparent and accountable reporting by AHPRA and the National Boards about their work in regulating the profession and protecting the public.

"The introduction of the National Scheme on 1 July 2010 represents an unparalleled reform of health practitioner regulation. This annual report provides comprehensive data about the first year of operation of the National Scheme, across all areas of operation of AHPRA and the National Boards," Dr Lockwood said.

”There is now clear evidence that the National Scheme is sound, robust and a great asset for the Australian community,” he said.

The annual report is an important source of information about the Board’s activities in 2010-11. Achievements for the Dental Board of Australia during the year included; seamless transition of registration of oral health therapists, forensic odontology specialist registration and endorsement for conscious sedation; consultation on limited registration types and general registration of practitioners with substantially equivalent qualifications; and policy development relating to teeth whitening/bleaching, use of botulism toxin (Botox) and one beam computed tomography.

Dr Lockwood encouraged health practitioners, patients, employers, educators and the Australian community to read the 2010-11 annual report, published at www.ahpra.gov.au under *Legislation and publications > AHPRA publications*.

More information about the National Scheme

More summaries of annual report data are published on the AHPRA website:

- [registrations](#)
- [criminal records checks](#)
- [notifications](#)
- [criminal record checks](#)
- [state and territory roundup: breakdown by profession](#) and
- [national information about other regulated health practitioner professions.](#)

For more information

- Refer to the AHPRA Annual Report
- Visit www.ahpra.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200

**AHPRA and the National Boards are responsible for the management of notifications against practitioners across Australia, except in NSW, where the Health Professional Councils, supported by the Health Professions Council Authority (HPCA), are responsible.*