



## Media release

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10 November 2016

### Annual Report reveals how the Dental Board of Australia worked to protect the public in 2015/16

The Dental Board of Australia intensified its focus on infection prevention and control requirements for registered dental practitioners during 2015/16, according to information released by AHPRA today in its [2015/16 annual report](#).

The 2015/16 annual report by AHPRA and the national health practitioner boards is a comprehensive record of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2016.

'Protecting the public is everyone's responsibility,' said Dr John Lockwood AM, Chair of the Dental Board of Australia. 'Effective infection prevention and control should underpin professional practice across all health sectors, including dental practice.'

The renewed focus on infection prevention and control came after a serious breach of the National Law by a Victorian man who pretended to be a dentist and treated patients in his home.

'The case was the first in a series of investigations that highlighted the risk patients who see unregistered practitioners take,' said Dr Lockwood. 'Our number-one priority is patient safety.'

Dr Lockwood is proud of the initiatives implemented by the Dental Board of Australia over the past 12 months, which include an awareness campaign targeting all dental practitioners to remind them of the Board's [Guidelines of infection control](#), which included a mail-out, fact sheet and self-assessment tool. These guidelines will be reviewed in 2016/17.

A [Tips for patients](#) fact sheet was also published by AHPRA and the Board, and a forum was held in October 2015 to bring various organisations together to strengthen partnerships and gain a better understanding of how to support dental practitioners to practise effective infection prevention and control.

#### More highlights of the past year include:

- **More health practitioners overall:** There were almost 20,000 more registrants in 2015/16 across the 14 regulated professions than there were last year, totalling 657,621 health practitioners nationally. Student registrations increased by more than 11,000 registrants year-on-year, totalling 153,710.
- **A simplified renewal process:** Online registration renewals reached a new high across all professions – with over 98% of all registrants renewing online and on time, making it easier for health practitioners to renew their registration each year.
- **A streamlined registration process for dental practitioners:** Over the past 12 months, the Board worked to improve registration pathways for each of the 13 approved dental specialties, and began developing an assessment model for overseas-trained dental specialists.
- **Increased registration for dental practitioners:** As of 30 June 2016, there were 21,741 registered dental practitioners across Australia, an increase of 2.51% from the previous year. Dental practitioners made up 3.3% of all registered health practitioners across the National Scheme.
- **More specialist dental practitioners:** Noting that there is a range of specialist dental registration categories, 89.5% of registered dental practitioners held general registration, 7.5% held general and

specialist registration, which shows a slight increase from the previous year, and 0.1% held specialist-only registration to practise a dental specialty, a rise of 15.4% year on year.

- **Growth in notifications across all professions:** There were 10,082 notifications received during the year, an increase of 19.7% nationally (representing 1.5% of the registration base). The top three notifier complaints related to clinical care (41.8%), medication issues (11.5%) and health impairment (10.7%). Just under half of all notifications were made by a patient, relative or member of the public. AHPRA closed 5,227 matters in the year.
- **Increase in new notifications about dentists:** In 2015/16 there were 1,025 notifications received nationally about dental practitioners (including data from the Health Professional Councils Authority in NSW). This represents an annual increase of 33.8%. AHPRA received and managed 497 of these matters, excluding HPCA, which manages regulatory matters in NSW.
- **AHPRA actively monitored 141 dental practitioners in 2015/16 (excluding HPCA):** This represents 2.8% of all cases being monitored in relation to conditions on registration across all professions.
- **There were 196 new complaints about possible dental-related statutory offences:** These complaints constitute 14.5% of all statutory offence matters in 2015/16. Almost all new matters related to the use of protected titles or advertising concerns.
- **Greater transparency:** A focus on improving transparency and accountability across all national health practitioner boards saw the introduction of quarterly performance reporting in April 2016. These reports are accessible [via the AHPRA website](#).

For more data and information relating to the Dental Board of Australia in 2015/16, please see [www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016). The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the Boards and highlights a multi profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

‘The regulation of over 660,000 registered health practitioners across 14 health professions and eight states and territories is an important task,’ said AHPRA CEO Mr Martin Fletcher. ‘There are many things to consider in regulation – but there is only one main focus, and that is public safety.’

Supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance can also be found on the annual report website.

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Expanded, profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

#### *For more information*

- Visit [www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016)
- For online enquiries visit [www.ahpra.gov.au/enquiry](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/enquiry)
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