



## Communiqué

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### April 2019 meeting of the Dental Board of Australia

The 106<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Dental Board of Australia (the Board) was held on Friday 26 April 2019 via Skype. This meeting was the Board's inaugural Skype meeting, and members agreed that while it is preferable to meet face-to-face, the success of the meeting and cost-effectiveness of this meeting format support the scheduling of future Skype meetings.

This communiqué highlights key discussions and considerations from the Board's meeting, as well as other relevant information.

We publish this communiqué on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. We encourage you to distribute it to colleagues and interested parties, including in the organisation you work.

#### Scope of practice update

Health Ministers referred the Board's proposed revised *Scope of practice registration standard* (the standard) was referred by Health Ministers to the [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#) (the Commission) in March 2019. The purpose of the referral is for the Commission to independently assess the patient quality, patient safety implications and the consumer benefit of the revised standard, and to report back to Health Ministers in July 2019. The Board is sharing all relevant background materials with the Commission to support the independent review of the standard.

The Board is continuing its engagement work to support the implementation of the proposed revised registration standard and will keep dental practitioners informed as this work progresses, including on the work of the Commission.

#### Continuing concerns about tongue-tie procedures

The Board is aware of concerns in the community about dentists providing treatment for tongue-tie and the use of surgical procedures on infants, such as frenotomy, to treat that condition.

The Board has made clear to dentists that anyone practising the treatment of tongue-ties must be able to demonstrate they have the necessary training, qualifications and competence to be able to do so safely.

Greater detail on the Board's position and the advice provided to dental practitioners on tongue-tie procedures is in our [Communiqué February 2018 meeting of the Dental Board of Australia](#) and [Newsletter Dental Board of Australia's May 2018](#).

The response from the profession in dealing with tongue-tie concerns has been encouraging with the Australian Dental Association (ADA) forming a cross-profession working group to develop a consensus statement on ankyloglossia diagnosis and management.

The Board's response to concerns raised about procedures, such as frenotomy, is guided by the [Regulatory principles for the National Scheme](#). The Board's regulatory response to dentists performing frenotomies has been proportionate with the understood risk posed by the procedure and is in keeping with the New Zealand Dental Council's position with similar circumstances.

The Board continues to watch and act on notifications around this area of concern to the community and health practitioners.

## Annual audit – professional indemnity insurance (PII) arrangements

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the Board have developed a nationally consistent approach to auditing health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards. Audits are an important part of the way National Boards and AHPRA can better protect the public. They help to ensure that practitioners are meeting the mandatory registration standards and provide important assurance to the community and the Boards.

Dental practitioners are reminded to be audit ready in 2019 by meeting the professional indemnity insurance (PII) obligations set by the Board.

Initial registration and annual renewal of registration requires a declaration that the health practitioner will not practice unless they have appropriate PII arrangements.

Don't take the risk of not meeting the requirements if audited and read the registration standard which outlines a practitioner's obligations on the [Board website](#).

## Dental assistant successfully prosecuted

A Victorian woman has been convicted in a New South Wales Court for charges laid by AHPRA.

A New South Wales Local Court convicted dental assistant, Ms Sara Matthews, of offences under the National Law<sup>1</sup> and fined her a total of \$4,000 after pleading guilty to three charges filed by the AHPRA. She was also ordered to pay AHPRA's costs for the amount of \$3,025.

Ms Matthews pleaded guilty to one count of unlawfully claiming to be authorised or qualified to practise in a health profession; in this case, dentistry; and two counts of performing restricted dental acts. Ms Matthews has never held registration as a registered health practitioner or student under the National Law with any National Board, including the Board

Dental Board of Australia Chair Murray Thomas said: 'Being a dental assistant does not mean you can perform procedures on patients that should be performed by a registered dental practitioner. Doing so is dangerous and reckless. When this does happen, it is patients who feel duped and betrayed. My advice to the public is to check using the online register of practitioners.'

For full details see the Board's [news item](#).

Anyone with concerns about whether an individual is registered with a national health profession board can check the [register of practitioners](#) maintained by AHPRA or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

## Accreditation update

Following a scheduled review of accreditation arrangements in 2018, the Dental Board of Australia decided that the Australian Dental Council (ADC) would continue to undertake the accreditation functions for the period 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2024.

Where accreditation functions are delivered by an external body such as the ADC, AHPRA enters an agreement with the council about the functions and associated funding. Work is underway on a new agreement for the period from 1 July 2019, which will involve new key performance indicators and principles for funding and fee setting.

## May meeting in New Zealand

In May the Board will hold its meeting in Wellington, New Zealand to facilitate engagement with the Dental Council New Zealand (the Council), share and discuss common issues for dental practitioner regulation, and in particular to learn from our New Zealand colleagues about their experience with recertification (professional assurance), embedding cultural safety into professional standards and practice for dental practitioners.

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

### Are your contact details up to date?

It is important that your contact details are up to date to receive renewal reminders from AHPRA and information from the Board. You can check your details via the Login icon at the top right of the [AHPRA website](#). Email accounts need to be set to receive communications from AHPRA and the Board to avoid misdirection to an account junk box.

### Conclusion

The National Board publishes a range of information about registration and the National Board's expectations of practitioners on its website at [www.dentalboard.gov.au](http://www.dentalboard.gov.au) or [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

For more information or help with questions about your registration, please send an [online enquiry form](#) or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Dr Murray Thomas  
**Chair, Dental Board of Australia**  
16 May 2019