



Communiqué

May 2019 meeting of the Dental Board of Australia

The 107th meeting of the Dental Board of Australia (the Board) was held on Thursday 30 May 2019 in Wellington, New Zealand. The Board's visit to New Zealand was in response to an invitation from the Dental Council New Zealand (DCNZ) and provided opportunities to share our regulatory experiences, discuss joint issues, and to learn from our New Zealand colleague about their work on cultural safety and continuing professional assurance (called recertification in New Zealand).

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) 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 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. The Board's May newsletter included some key clarifications about the proposed changes to the scope of practice standard in response to common questions we have received from stakeholders.

Learning from New Zealand about cultural safety

An important focus of the Board's meetings with the DCNZ was about each other's respective work on cultural safety. This work includes how the Board and DCNZ are learning about cultural safety, ways to incorporate cultural safety in professional standards for dental practitioners, and how the Board and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) as regulators, are working to ensure cultural safety in all aspects of regulatory work.

In discussions, the Board recognised that cultural safety is a journey, and the Board is just at the beginning. While there are many experiences and learning that regulators can share, it is important to recognise there are differences between the Australian and New Zealand experiences.

The Board is committed to contributing to the National Scheme's¹ [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy](#) and is keen to explore whether there are opportunities to progress work on cultural safety in the dental profession as part of this broader work.

Latest registrant data released

The Board has published its quarterly data report for 1 January-31 March 2019. There are 23,629 registered dental practitioners, a decrease of 85 on the figures from the 1 October-31 December 2018 report. Of the total, 17,675 are dentists. There are 98 practitioners endorsed for conscious sedation.

¹ National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The gender balance nationally for all dental practitioners is 51.8% female (12,243), 48.2% male (11,386). Of the female practitioners, 491 have specialist registration. Of the male practitioners, the number of specialists is 1,270.

For further details on registration by division, gender, age, principal place of practice and specialty, visit our [Statistics page](#).

Correction to student registration data in Annual Report 2017-18

Discrepancies identified, post-publication, in the student registration data in the Annual Report (Table 5 on page 38 of the Annual Report) have been corrected. The revised data is now available.

The error identified was that 1,161 students allocated to the medical profession, were, in fact, dental students. The revised report now has those student numbers reallocated to the dental profession.

Practitioners' responsibility to support public health programs

Australia's health regulators have reminded health practitioners about their responsibility to support public health programs, including vaccination.

Regulators have spoken out to support public safety, given mounting concerns about a five-year high in measles cases and an early spike in flu cases this year.

AHPRA and the National Boards for 16 professions have urged more than 740,000 registered health practitioners to take seriously their responsibilities for public health, including by helping patients to be protected from preventable illnesses.

AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher reminded practitioners that supporting public health programs, including vaccination and immunisation, and not promoting anti-vaccination views were regulatory responsibilities.

'Registered health practitioners have a regulatory responsibility to support patients to understand the evidence-based information available,' Mr Fletcher said.

National Boards set codes, standards and guidelines, including about protecting and promoting the health of individuals and the community, which they expect registered health practitioners to meet.

'Practitioners are of course entitled to hold personal beliefs, but they must ensure that they do not contradict or counter public health campaigns, including about the efficacy or safety of public health initiatives,' he said.

If practitioners do not comply and meet the professional standards set by their National Board, regulators can and do take action.

National Boards and AHPRA have taken action to manage risk to the public, in response to a number of concerns raised about practitioners (including medical practitioners, nurses and chiropractors) who have advocated against evidence-based vaccination programs. This has included restricting practitioners' practice pending further investigation, when there was a serious risk to the public.

Health practitioners can read the [media release](#) on the AHPRA website.

AHPRA launches WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation

In April, AHPRA officially launched as a designated World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation in the Western Pacific Region.

AHPRA, working in partnership with the National Boards, joins a list of over 800 institutions in more than 80 countries supporting WHO programs in areas such as nursing development, communicable diseases, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies.

Strengthening the regulation of the health workforce is an important part of the WHO's global strategy to build the human resources needed for access to safe and quality healthcare across the world.

Read the full media release on the [AHPRA website](#).

Information Publications Scheme – promoting accessibility of our information

From 1 June 2019, AHPRA and National Boards are required to comply with the Information Publication Scheme (IPS) established under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth). The IPS promotes openness and transparency and aims to reduce the number of Freedom of Information applications through the proactive publication of information. This requires that certain information and documents be made publicly available.

AHPRA and National Boards have worked together to implement the IPS and information has been recently published about it on the [AHPRA website](#).

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 or 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
20 June 2019