

## Communiqué

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### July and August 2020 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 120<sup>th</sup> and 121<sup>st</sup> meetings on Friday 31 July and Friday 28 August 2020 respectively. The Board and its committees have continued to meet by video-conferencing since March 2020.

This communiqué highlights the key discussions and considerations covered during the Board meetings 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 within your work or organisation.

#### Revised accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs

The Australian Dental Council (ADC) and the Dental Council of New Zealand (DC(NZ)) recently completed a review of the *ADC/DC(NZ) Accreditation standards for dental practitioner programs*, with the revised [standards](#) approved by the Board in July.

The standards come into effect on 1 January 2021 and the changes are:

- the addition of an introduction explaining the purpose of the standards and how they are to be used
- a dedicated domain for cultural safety
- inclusion of student understanding of the regulatory environment as a criterion under Domain 1 – Public safety
- introducing the need to involve dental consumers (including patients) within program design and management
- clarification that the focus on governance and quality assurance is at a program level (and not provider level)
- a greater expectation for dental practitioners to work with and learn from and about other dental and health practitioners, and
- revision of the assessment domain to make clear its intent and to reduce overlap within the criteria.

#### Financial hardship as a result of COVID 19

National Boards and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people in several ways, including financial hardship.

Financial hardship in the context of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) means that because of family tragedy, financial misfortune, unemployment, serious illness, impacts of a natural disaster, national health emergency and other serious or difficult circumstances a practitioner is unable to reasonably provide necessities such as food, accommodation, clothing, education and/or medical treatment for themselves, their family or other dependents, and by extension, the costs associated with their registration.

The COVID-19 pandemic is considered a national health emergency for the purpose of this definition.

For recent graduates, if they are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to pay the required fees, they should contact Ahpra's customer service team via [web enquiry](#) or on 1300 419 495 to discuss their individual situation before they complete their [online graduate application](#).

A payment plan will be available for registered practitioners renewing their registration by 30 November so they can pay the registration fee in two instalments. There will be more information available when renewal applications open in October.

## Guidelines on dental records – to be retired 1 October

In 2019, the Board carried out a review of the *Guidelines on dental records*, which included releasing a public consultation paper in November on the proposed retirement of the guidelines. The Board carries out regular reviews of its registration standards, codes, guidelines and policies to ensure continued relevance in a dynamic regulatory environment. Public consultation concluded in January 2020 and [four submissions](#) were received, which are published on the Board's website together with an overview of the public consultation process.

The Board will retire the guidelines on 1 October 2020 as the [Code of conduct](#) contains adequate guidance about health-record management. The *Code of conduct* is a crucial part of the Board's regulatory framework for setting minimum standards and regulatory guidance for the profession to protect the public and support the objectives of the National Scheme. As one of the Board's regulatory tools, the code will therefore be positioned as the main point of guidance for dental practitioners.

A fact sheet and self-reflective tool have been developed to help practitioners understand their obligations under the code and these will be published before retirement of the guidelines.

## Health Professions Agreement signed by the Board

The Dental Board approved the new Health Profession Agreement (HPA) between Ahpra and National Boards in July 2020. The HPAs align with the timeframe and objectives of our new [National Scheme Strategy 2020-25](#). This will shortly be available on the Board's website.

Under the National Law<sup>1</sup>, the Board and Ahpra are interdependent and work in partnership to implement the National Scheme, each with specific roles, powers and responsibilities set down in legislation.

The guiding principles of the National Law require the National Scheme to operate in a 'transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and fair way'; and for registration fees to be reasonable '...having regard to the efficient and effective operation of the scheme'.

Each year the Board and Ahpra publish an HPA that details the services provided by Ahpra that enable the Board to carry out its functions under the National Law.

## Are your contact details up to date?

Your contact details must be 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](#). Your email settings may need to be changed to receive emails from Ahpra or the Board and to avoid misdirection to junk mail.

## Conclusion

The Board publishes a range of information about registration and the 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). More information on the Board's work is also available in the Board's regular newsletter, with the [July edition](#) now available.

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

Dr Murray Thomas

**Chair, Dental Board of Australia**

September 2020

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