

Position statement

November 2022

Dental practitioners and students and the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Introduction

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) has approved registration standards, codes and guidelines that together form part of the regulatory framework for the profession. The framework guides the professional practice of registered dental practitioners and students in Australia.

This position statement, which should be read in conjunction with the Board's registration standards, codes and guidelines, was developed to provide practitioners information about the [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#) (the convention). The Board expects that practitioners and students will refer to and practise in alignment with the convention.

Dental practitioners and students are reminded that other regulations impact the use of therapeutic goods, including obligations under the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 (Cth). Dental practitioners should refer to the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#) (TGA) for more information.

Minamata Convention on Mercury

The convention is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury. Australia ratified the convention on 7 December 2021 and is legally bound to both the treaty obligations and decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP). The convention entered into force for Australia on 7 March 2022.

The COP is the convention's governing body, with decisions made by consensus at COP meetings, which occur every two years.

At the fourth COP (COP4) held in Bali, Indonesia on 21-25 March 2022, new phase-down actions for dental amalgam were agreed to in addition to existing requirements under Annex A, Part II of the convention.

Measures to phase-down the use of dental amalgam

The new measures agreed at COP4 require Australia to take appropriate measures to phase-down the use of mercury in dental amalgam. In particular, Australia is required to take action to ensure:

- mercury in bulk form must not be used by dental practitioners, and
- the use of dental amalgam for the dental treatment of deciduous teeth, of patients under 15 years, and of pregnant and breastfeeding women is not recommended, except when considered necessary by the dental practitioner based on the needs of the patient.

Dental practitioners and students are referred to further details about the convention at www.mercuryconvention.org/en.

Board's position on the Minamata Convention on Mercury

The Board expects dental practitioners and students will refer to and practise in alignment with the convention, including the phase-down actions for dental amalgam as described above.

Review

This position statement is based on information post-COP4. The statement will be reviewed regularly but at least after the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP5) in 2023.