

Communiqué

October, November and December 2021 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 134th, 135th and 136th meetings on Friday 29 October, 26 November and 17 December respectively. The Board and its committees continue to meet via video conferencing since March 2020.

This communiqué highlights the key discussions and considerations covered during the Board meetings and 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.

Review of the implementation of the Scope of Practice registration standard and guidelines

With the revised [Scope of Practice registration standard](#) now in place for over 12 months, the Board is undertaking a review of the implementation of the revised standard and guidelines and is seeking feedback from practitioners and our stakeholders to understand the effect of the changes and if our promotion of the revised document was effective.

The main change to the registration standard and guidelines is to allow dental hygienists, dental therapists and oral health therapists to practise as independent practitioners. The change removed the regulatory requirement that these divisions may only work within a structured professional relationship with a dentist.

Please note that programs to 'extend scope' (formerly known as add-on programs) were also removed from the revised *Scope of practice registration standard*, however this change to the standard reflected the Board's earlier decision in 2018 – the approval of programs expired on 31 December 2018.

More information is in our [Know your scope hub](#).

Practitioners can provide your feedback by completing a short, confidential and anonymous survey by [clicking here](#).

The [survey of stakeholders is available here](#).

Code of conduct – public consultation closes

Together with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice, Chinese Medicine, Chiropractic, Medical Radiation Practice, Occupational Therapy, Optometry, Osteopathy, Paramedicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy and Podiatry Boards of Australia, the Dental Board (National Boards) is reviewing the shared Code of conduct (the shared code).

Public consultation on a draft revised shared code commenced in May 2021 and closed on 6 July 2021.

Public consultation feedback was sought from stakeholders on a draft revised shared code, with the following key differences from the current shared code:

- adding principles that outline key content in each section
- including a new section about cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- relocating bullying and harassment guidance from section 3 Respectful and culturally safe practice to section 5 Working with other practitioners
- modifying section 4.8 Personal relationships about providing care to someone in a close personal relationship

¹ Up to two-week extensions were provided at the request of a small number of stakeholders

- relocating Professional boundaries guidance from section 9 Professional behaviour to section 4 Working with patients
- merging section 8 Maintaining professional performance into section 7 Minimising risk to patients to streamline content as section 8 contained only one subsection about continuing professional development, and
- minor edits to clarify meaning.

Once approved by all relevant Boards, an advance copy of the revised shared code is likely to be published early 2022 with a transition period before the revised shared code takes effect.

Work is continuing to develop:

- additional explanatory material about areas that public consultation highlighted as benefiting from further guidance
- content to promote external stakeholders' awareness of the revised shared code for use in news items, newsletters, social media posts and other media as appropriate
- information about the revised shared code for relevant Ahpra staff
- public facing content about the shared code for patients and consumers.

SMS renewal reminders

This year, the Board has decided to send some of its renewal reminders via SMS. The SMS provides a better experience, promotes registration renewal on time, minimises the reliance on email reminders and has proven effective in reducing the number of practitioners actively practising who unintentionally fail to renew and then need to stop practising and re-apply. The SMS alerts dental practitioners that they are still yet to renew and provides a hyperlink to renew online.

The approach was first trialled with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia and was successful with an SMS reminder sent to approximately 9000 registrants 'yet to renew' in the final week of the late period.

Whilst scheduled reminders are sent out to all practitioners throughout the renewal campaign, it remains the practitioner's professional responsibility to complete their registration renewal online and on time.

The Board reminds all practitioners to keep their contact information up to date with Ahpra to ensure that these reminders get to all dental practitioners.

Infection control guidelines – review finalised

The Board considered the outcomes of the public consultation on the review of the Guidelines for infection control (the guidelines) and decided to proceed with the option most strongly supported throughout the consultation: to retire the guidelines and replace them with other resources, including a self-reflective tool and fact sheet. This is due to come into effect 1 July 2022.

The decision and what it means for practitioners will be broadly communicated in early 2022, providing ample lead-in time for the change. The implementation plan will include practitioner focus groups to refine the self-reflective tool, and the consideration of whether there is a need for the development of consumer/patient resources to replace the Board's existing material. It will also include clear communication activities to support practitioners to understand that, while there would no longer be guidelines, the requirement to practise safely does not change.

Dental Practitioner Support service

Support for dental practitioners who need someone to talk to is just a quick phone call or click away.

Dental Practitioner Support is a national 24/7 health and wellbeing support service for all dental practitioners. Anyone using it does not have to give their name and can seek support anonymously.

The service offers health and wellbeing support to all dental practitioners, including dentists, dental prosthetists, oral health therapists, dental hygienists and dental therapists. It is also available to dental students, educators, employers, Australian Dental Council exam candidates and concerned family members and friends.

While funded by the Board, the service is run independently by [Turning Point](#), a leading addiction treatment, research and education organisation based in Victoria. This means practitioners can have complete confidence in reaching out for confidential support.

Access Dental Practitioner Support:

- 1800 377 700
- dpsupport.org.au

We ask all our stakeholders to continue to promote the service widely.

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 or www.ahpra.gov.au. More information on the Board's work is also available in the Board's regular newsletter. Read the latest edition, [November 2021](#).

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

Dr Murray Thomas

Chair, Dental Board of Australia

December 2022