

Response template for the public consultation on the proposed change to the protected title for the podiatry speciality of podiatric surgery

September 2024

This response template is the preferred way to submit your feedback to the public consultation on the Podiatry Board of Australia's proposed change to the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery.

Please provide any feedback in this document, including your responses to the questions in the text boxes on the following pages. The boxes will expand to accommodate your response. You do not need to respond to a question if you have no comment.

Making a submission

Please complete this response template and email to podiatryconsultation@ahpra.gov.au.

Consultation closes on 8 November 2024.

Publication of submissions

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Question A

Are you completing this submission on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?

Your answer:

☐ Organisation

Name of organisation: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Contact email: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

☒ Myself

Name: Chelsea Lee Petrick

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

If you are completing this submission as an individual, are you:

☒ A registered health practitioner?

Profession: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

☐ A member of the public?

☐ Other: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Question C

Would you like your submission to be published?

☒ Yes, publish my submission **with** my name/organisation name

☐ Yes, publish my submission **without** my name/ organisation name

☐ No – **do not** publish my submission

Your responses to the consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery? Why or why not?

- No. The title podiatric surgeon is the best descriptor of what podiatric surgeons are and what they do.
- The term podiatric surgeon is an international term used in the United States and the United Kingdom.
- If confusion exists, then it is best addressed by a public information campaign and by the practitioner providing appropriate information to the patient.
- The term podiatric, is indicative of podiatry, whilst 'surgical' is a demotion from being a true surgeon.
- No country in the world has what are termed surgical podiatrists.

2. Do you have an alternative suggestion for the protected title? If yes, how would your suggested title achieve the same result as 'surgical podiatrist' in providing greater clarity to consumers?

No.

3. What are the potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title?

- Consumers may be confused that surgical podiatrists are not sufficiently trained in foot and ankle surgery to the level they require and desire.
- The consumer will be at a disadvantage because a surgical podiatrist will never receive parity in funding, via Medicare and private health insurance companies, for their surgery. Their out-of-pocket expenses for surgery will therefore be higher.
- The consumer will be disadvantaged because specialist podiatrists will not have parity with medical specialists, such as orthopaedic surgeons, which prevents equality in interprofessional relationships, which is better for patient outcomes.
- Consumers will be at a disadvantage because a surgical podiatrist will not be able to advocate for them, on the same level as an orthopaedic surgeon, even should the orthopaedic surgeon have no specific training in the foot, ankle and lower limb.
- A surgical podiatrist will have less status in foot and ankle surgery compared to all other surgical specialist fields, even though these other fields/practitioners may perform little foot and ankle surgery. This means the consumer may undertake surgery with another surgeon, who does not have the same level of experience in foot and ankle surgery, as the surgical podiatrist.

4. What are the potential impacts, including potential costs, for podiatric surgeons of the proposed change in title?

- The impact of title change will be devastating to the field of podiatric surgery and the clients who benefit from their expertise.
- Absence of an appropriate title will ensure podiatric surgeons continue to receive inadequate professional recognition, funding for services rendered and ongoing vulnerability to unfair litigation and scrutiny.

5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?

- Title change from podiatric surgeon to surgical podiatrist will remove a level of parity for the profession of podiatry, with medicine, whilst most individual medical doctors see the profession as collaborative and not subordinate.

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Contact email: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

☒ Myself

Name: Reza Ravan

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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Your responses to the consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery? Why or why not?

No, I do not agree with the proposal to change the protected title.

The designation of podiatric surgery is acceptable and meaningful for podiatry professionals who have studied for many years longer than typical podiatrists before performing surgery. This title is perfectly suited for various reasons, including:

1- The title reflects the activity- Podiatric meaning connected to podiatry and feet. Surgery is cutting something out of the body. As a result, podiatric surgeons must hold this title in order to practice their speciality. They are clearly human beings, and they cannot be compared to surgical instruments or anything else than a surgeon. Nowhere in this title does it state that they are an MD or a medical doctor, and they indeed should not need to use MD doctor instead of that they should be proud of themselves for not wasting time studying useless courses like eye, ear, nose, throat, and so on that are irrelevant to their career. Despite the fact that all medical practitioners may not have the correct title for their profession, such as a general practitioner who performs plastic surgery, a plastic surgeon who performs ingrown toenail surgery, and a nephrologist who may treat the prostate, podiatric surgery is a title that accurately describes what the profession does.

2. Establish credibility and trustworthiness in the educational system- For many years, the programme taught in Australia was called podiatric surgery, and graduates of this programme were known as podiatric surgeons. Stability and reliability appear to be critical in our educational system.

3. Avoid changing internationally approved titles- The subjects taught to graduates from Australian universities are comparable to those studied by podiatric surgeons elsewhere.

4. Changing the title does not fix the problem- Using titles such as doctors, surgeons, and professors does not confer any credit on anyone. People occasionally use these titles, and some surgeons prefer to be addressed as Mr., which is also their decision. If there are still people in this country who lack education and prioritise titles over conducting proper research to identify the best professional for their problem, they will fall into a variety of traps. These are the poor people that have constant problems with all practitioners. These group of people should be corrected in 21 centuries in a progressive country like Australia. They should be instructed on how to conduct proper research on their practitioner; otherwise, if they try to claim competence based on long titles, they will always lose and I can say definitely the majority of medical complaint belong to these groups. A healthy community should understand that titles are marketing tools and should not expect to eliminate all marketing tools because some people are lazy and unable to conduct proper research. We have learned that instead of putting energy on limiting marketing tools we always should invest on education of people and trust that.

5- Allocating a title to one practitioner and another title to another practitioner has been used as a shelter for many practitioners- Encourage patients to seek treatment from knowledgeable practitioners rather than those with extensive titles. Similarly, practitioners should learn to use their knowledge rather than their title to get the compliance of their patients. Restricting the allotment of titles will allow the inappropriate practitioners to hide behind their assigned title and deceive patients.

2. Do you have an alternative suggestion for the protected title? If yes, how would your suggested title achieve the same result as 'surgical podiatrist' in providing greater clarity to consumers?

Are you enforcing that surgical podiatrist has a greater clarity?! I do not agree. Podiatric surgeons are human being and not tools.

What sort of English word is a “surgical podiatrist”?

3. What are the potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title?

They become lazy and want you to be their babysitter on all occasions.

Titles are actually marketing techniques in medicine. I know you did your best to stop it, but thank you; your efforts were futile. At medical universities, people without PhDs are referred to as professors, and all practitioners are referred to as doctors; do you still wish to perform a babysitting role for the community? If you want to be truly beneficial, I believe you should focus your efforts on the few, simple-minded groups in this community that continue to believe in marketing without research. Please do not deprive individuals of the opportunity to use their brains, and do not give a safe haven for bad practitioners who hide behind their broad titles and deceive the patients. A good practitioner should learn to have knowledge and use it in practice, rather than focusing on his long title.

4. What are the potential impacts, including potential costs, for podiatric surgeons of the proposed change in title?

I believe whatever is the expense for podiatric surgeons. If we understand correctly, the cost to the reputation of the Australian health system outweighs the cost to the podiatric surgeons. I anticipate that it will be difficult for you and your credibility to breach established regulations and demonstrate your distrust by doing something that truly benefits no patient or practitioner.

5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?

You do something in the short term, but you have to undo it as society evolves. The main issue isn't the title; it's the patients who don't view titles as marketing techniques and prefer to believe them. If you want to do the right thing, focus on the genuine issue and educate those patients. Otherwise, changing titles is not beneficial to anyone.

Consider changing the title to whatever you want; uninformed members of the community will grow more reliant on you, have higher expectations, and will eventually lose in another area. From another perspective, improper practitioners will use their assigned titles instead of their knowledge and art to protect themselves from a lack of competency and encouraging patient participation.

Furthermore, you demonstrate to everyone how untrustworthy Australia's health and educational systems are, causing us to lose faith in ourselves. Doctors have been graduated and practicing for years under the wrong title, and we, as health managers, are focusing on the symptoms rather than the underlying causes.

Titles are marketing tools; our expectations from you is to keep them that way and focus on realistic solutions to help and solve real problems.

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Question A Are you completing this submission on behalf of an organisation or as an individual?
Your answer: <input type="checkbox"/> Organisation Name of organisation: Click or here to enter text. Contact email: Click or tap here to enter text. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Myself Name: Christopher Raybould_ Contact email: [REDACTED]
Question B If you are completing this submission as an individual, are you: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A registered health practitioner? Profession: Podiatrist <input type="checkbox"/> A member of the public? <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Click or tap here to enter text.
Question C Would you like your submission to be published? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, publish my submission with my name/organisation name <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, publish my submission without my name/ organisation name <input type="checkbox"/> No – do not publish my submission

Your responses to the consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery? Why or why not?
<p>Yes! The term "Podiatric Surgeon" implies to the public that the person has become a Doctor first at a bona fide university and then gone on to specialise in "Podiatric Surgery" which is not the case.</p>
2. Do you have an alternative suggestion for the protected title? If yes, how would your suggested title achieve the same result as 'surgical podiatrist' in providing greater clarity to consumers?
<p>I cannot see an alternative to "Surgical Podiatrist" which is what they are.</p> <p>I can also understand why the public are so confused by the term "Podiatric Surgeon" which implies the person concerned has become a Doctor first and then gone onto specialise in Podiatric Surgery. This argument to my knowledge often comes up by prosecuting lawyers over many years.</p>
3. What are the potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title?
<p>The question arises that it may be better for the profession as a whole and to avoid ambiguity for the public to replace "Podiatric Surgeon" with the term "Surgical Podiatrist" which in essence is what they are. This action will obliterate public misconception which is paramount as well as immediately disarm any legal argument in the future if and when any unfortunate litigation arises.</p>
4. What are the potential impacts, including potential costs, for podiatric surgeons of the proposed change in title?
<p>It would give greater clarify and protection to the public.</p> <p>The impact for Podiatric Surgeons is no less or greater than when the Australian College of Surgical Podiatrists (ACSP) renamed themselves Australasian College of Podiatric Surgeons.</p> <p>The public will be able to make an informed decision on the specialist they wish to consult about their podiatric condition, Like with any elective surgery there is always an element of risk and possible consequences so in essence the patient will be better informed</p>
5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?
<p>None that I can think of.</p>

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Your answer:

☐ Organisation

Name of organisation: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Contact email: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

☒ Myself

Name: Nisha Rayka

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

If you are completing this submission as an individual, are you:

☒ A registered health practitioner?

Profession: Podiatrist

☐ A member of the public?

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Your responses to the consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery? Why or why not?

No, I disagree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry speciality of podiatric surgery. I believe the title itself is clear for the Podiatric surgeon profession. A new title could confuse patients, healthcare professionals, and insurance providers, leading to misunderstandings about the scope of practice and expertise of podiatric surgeons.

I believe the first part of any surgeon's title refers to their area of training and expertise. The patient can understand that a general podiatrist has some limitations in areas and can not perform foot and ankle surgery, while a Podiatric surgeon will be the answer who performs foot and ankle surgeries within the scope of their expertise.

The proposed title change for podiatric surgeons could have significant implications for the professional identity and recognition of podiatric surgeons. Such as 1: Loss of Distinction: A title change could blur the lines between general podiatrists and podiatric surgeons, potentially leading to a loss of distinction and recognition for the specialized training and expertise that podiatric surgeons possess. 2: Diminished Credibility: A title change could be perceived as a downgrade or a loss of prestige, potentially diminishing the credibility and reputation of podiatric surgeons among patients, healthcare professionals, and the broader medical community. 3: Impacts on Recruitment and Retention: A title change could affect the attraction of the profession to potential students and young professionals, potentially leading to decreased recruitment and retention rates.

2. Do you have an alternative suggestion for the protected title? If yes, how would your suggested title achieve the same result as 'surgical podiatrist' in providing greater clarity to consumers?

I do not have any alternative suggestion for the protected title, because I believe the current "Podiatric surgeon" title itself is more clear for the general population to understand who is trained to perform foot and ankle surgeries rather they searching out who is specialized in that area.

3. What are the potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title?

I believe it can create more confusion amongst the general population, since "podiatric surgeon" is already in use, which makes more sense too. The change can have implications for reimbursement and insurance coverage, potentially affecting the financial viability of podiatric surgery practices. A title change could impact the international recognition and reciprocity of podiatric surgery qualifications, potentially limiting opportunities for collaboration, research, and professional development. A title change could lead to an identity crisis within the profession, potentially causing podiatric surgeons to question their role, purpose, and value within the healthcare system. A title change could lead to an

identity crisis within the profession, potentially causing podiatric surgeons to question their role, purpose, and value within the healthcare system.

4. What are the potential impacts, including potential costs, for podiatric surgeons of the proposed change in title?

It will be more time consuming and more confusion among future patients and other practitioners. It will impact on cost for updating on websites, information materials and signage. The cost and time will impact not only practitioners but support staff and patients too. The change in title might have legal implications, such as the need to update contracts, agreements, and other legal documents. This could lead to additional costs and administrative burdens.

5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?

The change in title might lead to confusion among future patients, including employees, and partners, who may not be aware of the new title or its implications. This could result in miscommunication, misunderstandings, and potential errors.

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Contact email: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

☒ Myself

Name: A/Prof Caroline Robinson

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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Profession: Podiatry

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Your responses to the consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery? Why or why not?

I disagree with the proposal to change the protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery.

The title 'podiatric surgeon' has been in common use for many decades in the US, UK, Europe and Australia.

The term 'surgeon' is not restricted to medical practitioners *vis* 'dental surgeon', 'ophthalmic surgeon', 'veterinary surgeon'.

The specialism of podiatric surgery emerged in the 1970s to address the woeful outcomes of orthopaedic foot and ankle surgery. This should not be forgotten. A change in title to replace 'podiatric surgeon' denies the long history of podiatric surgery in the US, UK, Europe and Australia, and the rigorous evidence base which has been accumulated over this time.

2. Do you have an alternative suggestion for the protected title? If yes, how would your suggested title achieve the same result as 'surgical podiatrist' in providing greater clarity to consumers?

The title 'podiatric surgeon' should be maintained.

3. What are the potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title?

The term 'surgical podiatrist' might be used by any registered podiatrist who chooses to specialise in surgery. This may lead to greater confusion for the public in understanding the difference in scope of practice between a registered podiatrist who specialises in cutaneous procedures and a qualified podiatric surgeon who has a specialised scope of practice gained through postgraduate study.

How would the Board propose to differentiate legitimate scope of practice amongst a group of 'surgical podiatrists'? Practice boundaries will become blurred with the potential for increasing risk to consumers.

4. What are the potential impacts, including potential costs, for podiatric surgeons of the proposed change in title?

Potential impacts may include:

loss of professional status,

reduced number of clients if the perception is that a 'surgical podiatrist' is less capable than an 'orthopaedic surgeon',

less incentive for a podiatrist to engage in surgical postgraduate study, thus reducing the pipeline and pool of podiatric surgeons.

5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?

Changing the title from 'podiatric surgeon' to 'surgical podiatrist' diminishes the status of podiatry as a profession i.e. it reduces the visibility of an established specialist pathway for career development.

A perceived negative change to a specialist pathway may reduce the recruitment of students to podiatry courses and also increase the risk of attrition from the podiatry profession. A small loss of numbers in a small profession has a disproportionately large impact.

Podiatry has always had relatively little power in the health sector, as one of the smaller allied health professions. To make this change of title signals to the orthopaedic surgical community that they have once again exerted their considerable power and influence to discredit and quash their competitor podiatric surgeons.