



Private Healthcare Australia
Better Cover. Better Access. Better Care.



Response to the review of the use of the title 'oral surgeon'

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About Private Healthcare Australia

Private Healthcare Australia (PHA) is the Australian private health insurance industry's peak representative body. We have over 20 registered health funds throughout Australia as members and collectively represent 98% of people covered by private health insurance. PHA member funds provide healthcare benefits for more than 14 million Australians.

Response

Private health insurers have a strong vested interest in ensuring that consumers are informed through the use of protected titles. PHA is disappointed that our consumer perspective representing over 14 million Australians was not sought as part of the targeted review. PHA has submitted to a number of consultations on protected title, and it is puzzling that the Board did not seek our views.

First, private health insurers are often called upon to fund medical procedures provided by accredited surgeons to fix issues caused by inappropriate surgery provided by inadequately trained practitioners. This increases premiums for all policy holders. (PHA does not submit that there are quality concerns with oral surgeons – we have not had an opportunity to examine our data in detail.)

Second, the community's confusion around qualifications means that health funds are often criticised for not covering the costs of procedures provided by people calling themselves surgeons. It can be difficult for funds to explain the difference between an accredited surgeon and a person who is not a medical practitioner nominating as a surgeon. Consumers can assume they are covered for a procedure when they are not.

For this reason, PHA supports title protection for medical practitioners using the title surgeon. We suggest the Dental Board consider changing the protected require the title to include the word 'dental' rather than using the unqualified phrase 'surgeon' to describe the endorsement of a person who does not hold a Fellowship of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons or equivalent.