

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

September 2024

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Making a submission

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Consultation closes on 8 November 2024.

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Initial questions

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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: Cate Melville

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?

☐ Other:

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?

The protected title for the podiatry specialty of podiatric surgery should not be changed. The title Podiatric Surgeon is currently used, and has been historically used for decades, in multiple countries internationally as well as in Australia. Changing the title would cause confusion for the public, for referring practitioners, and for professional interaction between practitioners and colleagues from different countries; as podiatric surgeon is the title utilised internationally. Having practiced as a registered podiatric surgeon for almost three decades and having been a previous State Podiatry Registration Board Chairperson, it was extremely rare for a patient to report having assumed that a podiatric surgeon was a registered medical practitioner. There are better ways of reducing any perceived confusion of the public without changing the internationally-recognised title of this podiatric speciality. The term for a practitioner performing surgery is "surgeon". The title 'surgical podiatrist' would be very confusing and unusual as such a term is not used elsewhere; for example, surgical veterinarian or surgical dentist.

I have been present during countless appointments between a podiatric surgeon and patient. There has never been any confusion about what qualifications the podiatric surgeon has. The podiatric surgeon explained every time what he is and what he does.

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?

Really, I think the title Podiatric Surgeon should remain; however if the Podiatry Registration Board of Australia is completely convinced that Australian consumers require greater clarity, the words "Specialist Podiatrist" could be mandated to be appended in brackets after the title Podiatric Surgeon. This respondent however does not believe such perceived confusion is of sufficient magnitude to warrant this type of further clarification.

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

The Australian public, health consumers, State and Federal Governments, other health professionals across the country, and associated health industry personnel have known podiatric surgeons by this title for over three decades.

Surgical podiatrist is an unfamiliar terminology which would be confusing to health consumers (and others). Information for consumers is widely and easily accessible for anyone seeking clarification of the education, training, and scope of practice of podiatric surgeons in Australia and/or internationally.

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

The impacts of a change in title for podiatric surgeons are predominantly centred on confusion domestically and internationally. Consistent use of title across a profession globally is desirable. Potential costs incurred for podiatric surgeons following a title change would be relatively modest in dollar terms.

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

I believe the amount of confusion or misunderstanding of the public and health consumers as to the background, education and training of podiatric surgeons is negligible, and does not require a change of an internationally-recognised professional title. The addition of the words 'specialist podiatrist' would suffice in clarifying any confusion without the negative consequences of a title change.

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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: Dr. Richard Middleton

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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

☒ A registered health practitioner?

Profession: Anaesthetist (Retired)

☐ A member of the public?

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

Question C

Would you like your submission to be published?

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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 do NOT agree.

It demeans and downgrades the level of expertise obtained through significant training and surgical experience that the Podiatric Surgeons I worked with for a number of years displayed.

I would go further and say that they demonstrated a greater application of their skill and care than many Orthopaedic surgeons I also worked with.

This is all about professional jealousy. Such a deliberate attempt to undermine the capabilities of Podiatric Surgeons should NOT be allowed by AHPRA.

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?

It should be up Podiatric Surgeons themselves. Not others..
Options ??

Keep as is..

Foot and Ankle Surgeon.

Foot and Ankle Surgical Specialist.

Specialist Foot and Ankle Surgeon.

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

Undermining their opportunity to receive dedicated Specialist Surgical care from people with extra training in the intricacies of foot and ankle anatomy and function.

Orthopaedic surgeons 'with an interest' does not do the same extensive training, as I understand.

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

Demeans their capabilities, skills and application and of course impacts their professional income.

As intended.

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

'The Board' should be able to work that out for themselves.

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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: Julie Miller

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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

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Profession: Podiatrist

☐ A member of the public?

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

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NO. Podiatric Surgeons are being targeted for abuse by the Orthopaedic profession. The same attack has not been directed to Dental Surgeons or other health professional groups.

There is no foundation for this attack on Podiatric Surgery other than ego, marking territory, self-righteousness, power and other bullying behaviours/tactics.

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?

DO NOT ALLOW PODIATRIC SURGEONS TO CONTINUE TO BE BULLIED BY ORTHOPODS.
PROTECT THEIR TITLE, WHICH THEY HAVE WORKED EXTREMELY HARD TO EARN !!

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

DO NOT ALLOW PODIATRIC SURGEONS TO CONTINUE TO BE BULLIED BY ORTHOPODS.
PROTECT THEIR TITLE, WHICH THEY HAVE WORKED EXTREMELY HARD TO EARN !!

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

The cost is allowing bullies to prevail, where all forms of bullying are UNACCEPTABLE.

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

YES, ACCEPTING THIS BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IS ABHORENT

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Question A

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

Your answer:

X Organisation

Instep Podiatry (SA) Pty Ltd

Contact email: [REDACTED]

X Myself

Name: **Jack Miller**

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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

X A registered health practitioner?

Profession: **Registered Podiatrist**

☐ A member of the public?

☐ Other:

Question C

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Definitely not. In my opinion the proposal to change the name is instigated by professional jealousy, largely by orthopedic surgeons, and not supported by evidence-based research.

As far as I am aware the outcomes for Podiatric Surgery vs Orthopedic Surgery on the foot and ankle are not in any way proportionally worse for Podiatric Surgeons in comparison to Orthopedic Surgeons.

A protected title should not be changed merely because the public battles to understand the word "podiatric". Titles should not be changed because segments of the public are uneducated or ignorant

The Podiatry Board should in fact focus their attention on better educating the public, not changing titles supposedly to protect public safety "public safety is the board's highest priority and it is our duty to ensure patients are not confused or unintentionally misled by a title..." Professor Cylie Williams.

The implication of this is ridiculous. If the public battles to understand a title, it should be changed?

If this were true then we should also change the title "Podiatry", which so many people do not understand, back to "Chiropody", and perhaps other professional words like "Proctology" and "Enterology", which the public also battle to understand should also be changed. This way of reasoning is absurd.

Changing the title, which has been protected since 2014, to "Surgical Podiatrist" is thoroughly misleading, as all Podiatrists perform Nail Wedge Resection procedures, which is a surgical procedure, making us all Surgical Podiatrists.

Podiatric Surgeons are exactly that...Podiatrists who are Doctors in their field of Podiatric Medicine, who perform surgical foot and ankle procedures.

They pose no more risk to the public than Orthopedic Surgeons do, and the facts and the evidence to support the proposed changes is simply not there.

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?

More confusion to the general public- not less.

No clarity regarding the questions about the practitioner's qualifications, skills, training etc.

The only benefit is to the Orthopedic Surgeons.

The Podiatry Board should educate the public as mentioned.

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

Lack of funding for Podiatric Surgery (as is the case presently) in comparison to funding for Orthopedic Surgeons by Health Funds.

Diluting our professional status and undermining our professional ability, and irreparably damaging our professional stability and future.

Placing us behind the rest of the world's recognition of podiatrists as "Doctors of Podiatric Medicine" who are recognised and understood (surprisingly) by the public and other medical professionals as "Podiatric Physicians", and "Surgeons".

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

Putting our profession and its future at risk and preventing growth and acceptance of our profession.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Podiatryconsultation](#)
Subject: Response template for the public consultation on the proposed change to the protected title for the podiatry speciality of podiatric surgery
Date: Tuesday, 5 November 2024 5:45:54 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

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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: Dr Haydar Ozcan

Contact email: [REDACTED]

Question B

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

☒ A registered health practitioner?

Profession: Podiatric Surgeon

☐ A member of the public?

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

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to 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery?

Why or why not?

No don't agree.

- a) From the outset, it's important to emphasise that these concerns are unfounded, largely inaccurate and are not supported by the evidence.
- b) Podiatric surgeon is an internationally recognised and protected title. As an AHPRA registered paramedical specialist for 30 years it is important to be part of an international specialist community. Our training and continuing education is on an international level. This is important to keep pace with constant advances in our speciality fields and maintain the highest quality care for THE PUBLIC. As a small specialty, the international ties are even more important.
- c) The term 'surgical podiatrist' has never been used. Following the history of use of this title shows it was used before a structured post graduate course was the requirement for registration. To return to an old title appears outmoded and downplays the significant amount of additional training now required to specialise. To become a registered AHPRA specialist is a long and expensive proposition. We forgo other things in our lives for our dedication to our profession.
- d) The term: 'surgical podiatrist' does not denote a specialist field of medicine. To use the term 'surgical podiatrist' when under the qualification of a podiatrist allows certain surgeries (i.e. use of a scalpel) I believe makes this more confusing for the public. As the scope of practice for a podiatric surgeon far exceeds those of a podiatrist doing surgery.
- e) This change in title appears to have started following the issues with cosmetic surgeons. I feel it is important to note that 'cosmetic surgeon' was not a recognised medical speciality. There was no further training or registration requirements to use this title.
- f) The term dental surgeon is synonymous with dentist. The term surgeon is used in the paramedical field and is recognised as not being sole for the use of those with medical qualifications.
- g) Just imagine the level of confusion PUBLIC will be facing when their surgeon is the person who will be performing complex surgeries on their feet, but not allowed to call themselves 'surgeon'. I as podiatric surgeon do spend time explaining to each patient who we are what we do and how we differ from orthopaedic surgeons. Patient understand the different training level well.
- h) The actual confusion used to be among the medical service providers like GP's, specialists, pharmacists etc. This is getting better with time but this process could have been much better managed by the Board. To date I do not remember any campaign by AHPRA explaining the nature of podiatric surgery to other specialists and medical staff. It is much easier, simpler, cheaper, and most effective to run a campaign to other medical providers, then trying to change the name of a profession. The Board seems bias with their approach, and it is becoming evident that they are fixated with the title change. Sadly, this is very toxic and will have ill consequences both among the profession, public and legally.
- i) 'Surgical Podiatrist' is hybrid and misleading term, indicating that such a practitioner is not a 'bone-fide surgeon', and a podiatrist first and foremost, when in fact they are a surgeon first and foremost. Medically trained surgeons are surgeons first and foremost, not general medical practitioners, who practice surgery. I personally have not been working as a podiatrist (i.e. cutting toenails, doing GTs, and prescribing orthotics) for many years. All I did was surgery so term surgical podiatrist will create misperception among the public.
- j) The APB should consider its duty to public safety, in addition to its duty to ensure that podiatric medicine advances and develops. The APB should have addressed this issue, via a genuine collaborative effort with the Australasian College of Podiatric Surgeons (ACPS), and considered such options as public education, patient-practitioner interface education, in addition to simply allowing time for any perceived issue to be resolved, which is best undertaken, as per the Independent Review recommendations...engagement and discussion. The APB should in collaboration with the ACPS, be proactive in facilitating the full integration of podiatric surgery, into the public health sector, which would certainly go a long way to addressing any perceived public confusion, as well as helping the consumer.

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 – without the term 'surgeon' it is confusing for everyone.

Happy to put in clinical guidance /code of conduct that pod sx must provide clarity in advertising , web page or another public facing docs that they are a specialist podiatrist and allowing specialises in foot and ankle surgery or similar.

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

- a. The term: 'surgical podiatrist' does not denote a specialist field of medicine. To use the term 'surgical podiatrist' when under the qualification of a podiatrist allows certain surgeries (i.e. use of a scalpel) I believe makes this more confusing for the public. As the scope of practice for a podiatric surgeon far exceeds those of a podiatrist doing surgery.
- b. Just imagine the level of confusion PUBLIC will be facing when their surgeon is the person who will be performing complex surgeries on their feet but is not allowed to call themselves 'surgeon'. I as podiatric surgeon do spend time explaining to each patient who we are what we do and how we differ from orthopaedic surgeons. Patients understand the different training level well.
- c. The public will not perceive podiatric surgeons as surgeons who do complex foot surgeries, but instead podiatrists who do simple surgeries i.e. nail, wart surgeries. So if the so called 'podiatrists start doing complex surgeries the confusion will get worse among the public, and other health professionals.

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

- a. Title change will affect all our dealings with ASICS, ATO, Financial institutions, schools, hospitals, insurance providers, etc.
- b. Podiatric surgeons will be stressed about getting reprimanded for not complying with the changes. This will be increasing notifications and the workload of AHPRA.
- c. Each practitioner earned the title of Podiatric Surgeon after many years of sacrifice and education. The title change will cause mental anguish and stress on these health providers.
- d. The cost of web site and other advertising material changes.
- e. If the name change goes ahead the Podiatric surgeons will never get into public system or get better private health coverage.
- f. Their business will suffer which will put financial, and consequently mental stress on podiatric surgeons and their families.

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

1. Restricting the title from one non-medically qualified group of health professions and allowing others, such as Dental and Oral Surgeon, to continue using it represents a gross injustice and promotes inequality within the healthcare system. This highly unfair approach by AHPRA will have legal consequences.

