

## 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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Organisation

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

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

Myself

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

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

### Question B

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

A registered health practitioner?

Profession: Podiatry, Podiatric Surgery

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, I do not agree with the proposed change. It does not benefit the public, it does not reflect international standards, and it will have far reaching detrimental effects on podiatric surgery in Australia. The term 'podiatric surgeon' clearly describes what I do as a professional and the services I offer to the Australian public. My patients are aware of my qualification and profession, they often seek me out precisely because I am a podiatrist first and a surgeon second. I am proud of my profession and the effort I made to become a podiatric surgeon. I can offer my patients the full gamut of services, conservative, surgical, and rehabilitation. I have never had to explain the term surgeon to any patient, the only thing I have ever had to explain is 'podiatric' and giving my patients their due respect it has never taken more than a sentence to explain what podiatric means. I would also draw your attention to my qualifications, I hold a Doctor of Podiatric Medicine and a Doctor of Podiatric Surgery, the words 'podiatric' and 'surgery' appear in my qualifications, the title podiatric surgeon logically flows from those qualifications and my registration with 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?

There is no clear alternative. Podiatric Surgeon is as linguistically clear as surgical podiatrist. Despite what some submissions from orthopaedic surgeons have asserted the only profession that has been found to 'abuse' the term 'surgeon' is the medical profession and their 'cosmetic surgeons'. Podiatric surgeons as you refer to above are podiatrists who perform surgery. Individuals who perform surgery are by definition surgeons. Podiatric surgeons are podiatrists who are registered to and do perform surgery, they are surgeons in understanding held by patients, laymen, and professionals alike.

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

Consumers understanding will not be impacted in any meaningful way by these changes. As a podiatric surgeon I will still have to provide my patients with extensive information about my profession, fee structure, and services.

There is a chance that private insurance companies will fight harder and refuse to fund podiatric surgery even more than they currently do and this will have a significant impact on consumers. Consumers already struggle to get coverage for surgical fees when a procedure is performed by a podiatric surgeon, if it is even harder then more patients than ever will not be able to access the services they need. We are not cosmetic surgeons, we perform reconstructive surgery on a part of the body that regularly impacts overall quality of life and general function. While our surgeries are classified as "elective", the large majority of my patients feel that to not proceed with treatment would mean avoiding or struggling to undertake the normal activities of an active healthy life. Without our services they face extraordinary wait times in the public system or the potential of seeing a general orthopaedic surgeon without the same experience, training or understanding of this complex surgical area or the accompanying conservative care and rehabilitation that is required for successful podiatric treatment.

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

The impact on podiatric surgeons in Australia will be significant. I can attest that I know of at least one podiatric surgeon who has already begun to wind up his business because of his fear of this change. There is a logistical cost to each podiatric surgery business in Australia of course, but there is also a human cost here, podiatric surgeons are podiatrists, allied health professionals who have dedicated great investment and effort into taking their profession as far as it can go in order to serve their patients fully and as well as they can. We do not have any of the support or protection of the general medical profession or specialties, we are constantly berated and diminished by our orthopaedic colleagues, we fight for our patients with insurance companies, we fight to get recognition from financiers and indemnity insurance companies and many of us face significant personal debt as a result of setting up a health service. I can be honest in saying that this will devastate the podiatric surgery workforce. Many older surgeons will retire and the younger and middle generation will be fighting harder than ever before to keep their businesses open. Additionally, the current trainee generation will be faced with a bleak choice, continue their significant training to enter a profession with limited prospects, or cut their losses. Recruitment of future trainees faces obvious motivation challenges, be a “surgical podiatrist” or become a surgeon elsewhere.

It would be an utter tragedy if this damage was done to a profession on the basis of a Review that overwhelming found that podiatric surgery was safe, in demand, and face growing demand in the future. Professor Patterson implored Government to help the profession “flourish not flounder”, this change does nothing for the profession except push it closer to floundering.

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

Yes, by proceeding with this recommendation the Board is jeopardising the intended outcome of the Review. The Review’s other positive recommendations will be harder to implement if the profession is diminished in this way, loss of workforce, loss of status within the health community, loss of consumer engagement, will make the Review’s message of growing the profession less likely to occur. Conversely, this recommendation will strengthen the medical profession and its grip on the Australian health care system. Professor Patterson acknowledges that this recommendation was strongly influenced by the orthopaedic surgeons, individuals who are not stakeholders in this issue beyond their status as private surgeons in direct commercial competition with podiatric surgeons. This action is unnecessary and uniquely detrimental to a small profession that is struggling to survive and provides an important and needed service to the Australian public.

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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: [David George Survepalli](#)

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: [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

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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. Podiatric surgeon is a protected title and is known around the world as podiatrists who specialises in foot and ankle surgery. Having to change the this well known self explanatory title to surgical podiatrist is an insult and demeaning. Public understanding of this title is sufficient and in my experience there is no confusion between orthopaedic and podiatric surgeon.

### 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?

Podiatric surgeon for podiatrists with advanced training in foot surgery should be retained.

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

Title of surgical podiatrist will confuse consumers.

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

Am unsure of this.

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

Change of title from podiatric surgeon to surgical podiatrists will made Australia a laughing stock of the world. Most importantly there is no added benefit to public by the title change. It will only confuse the public. This new title will be a unheard term which will demean the speciality.

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#### Your answer:

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

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

Myself

Name: Natalie Tanner

Contact email: [REDACTED]

### Question B

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

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

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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 don't agree with this change in title. The title Podiatric Surgeon does not mislead the public. The work surgeon is not protected, You have oral surgeon that are specialised dentists and not medical doctors and even arborists use the word surgeon. If the Podiatric surgeon on consultation discusses that he/she is not a medical doctor but has had extensive post graduate training, then there should be no doubt on the issue.

### 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 profession of podiatrists that have gone through many years of training to perform surgery on the foot and ankle are surgeons. It is difficult to see how any other title other than podiatric surgeon would explain what they do.

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

Many podiatrists perform some surgery such as nail surgery and verrucae surgery which is part of their graduate training so are, in theory surgical podiatrists

How would the title surgical podiatrist for individuals who perform podiatric surgery which consists of extensive bone and joint surgery be differentiated between a normal podiatrist doing nail surgery and a podiatric surgeon. This I feel is misleading to the public. In the UK a patient in the first consultation is given a leaflet to read and sign explaining that they are not medical doctors and it explains the training undertaken to become a podiatric surgeon. This is at the first consultation so the patient is fully informed the surgeon undertaking the surgery is not a medical doctor, but a highly skilled foot and ankle specialist and surgeon.

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

I feel proposed change of title dumbs down the profession of podiatric surgery. Individuals spend many years training under a robust training program in Australia, USA and UK. They train and help many patients in their field from elective surgery to help keep waiting lists down, to limb salvage surgery especially in the patient population with diabetes. Therefore, they are surgeons and the title should remain to reflect this

Podiatric surgeons are well respected in the UK where I trained. And are an integral part of the health system.

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<b>5. Are there any unintended consequences the Board might not have considered in relation to the proposed change of title?</b>
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The impact of the podiatric surgical profession will be I feel degraded with the change of title .
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#### Your answer:

Myself

Name: Joshua Taylor

Contact email: [REDACTED]

### Question B

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

A registered health practitioner?

Profession: Podiatrist

### Question C

Would you like your submission to be published?

Yes, publish my submission **with** my name

## 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 change in title undermines the strength of the podiatry profession and undermines the extensive and rigorous study undertaken by podiatric surgeons in Australia, without adding increased safety or improving outcomes for consumers. The change would represent a departure from precedent established in other Commonwealth countries, such as the United Kingdom, who use the title 'podiatric surgeon'. I believe a change of this protected title would set back progress made in the Australian podiatry profession by decades. This backwards step would significantly impact the Australian public, who need more qualified, well-trained surgeons who can reduce surgical waiting times and provide professional, safe and thorough pre-, peri-, and post-surgical care.

I believe alternative changes, such as education and awareness campaigns by the Australian Podiatry Association, the Podiatry Board of Australia and individuals in the podiatry profession should instead be the focus of change, allowing the public to make informed decisions and provide informed consent.

### 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?

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

The potential impacts for consumers of the proposed change in title include unnecessary confusion for the public and unwarranted lack of respect and trust in podiatric surgeons in Australia. The change would open avenues for external stakeholders to further discredit podiatric surgeons and monopolise foot and ankle surgery in Australia, negatively impacting consumer waiting times and outcomes.

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

The proposed change would be financially, mentally and professionally devastating for podiatric surgeons in Australia. Podiatric surgeons have dedicated years of their life to earn speciality skills and a protected title. The stripping of this title after attaining it would ruin their professional careers and impact their personal lives.

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

It is no exaggeration to state that the mental health of podiatric surgeons in Australia would be severely impacted by the proposed change of title. The podiatry profession at large would also suffer negative consequences, in a time when podiatry is already fighting to gain the respect of allied health peers and the wider public. Health consumers, especially those in rural areas; however, would suffer the most, with the proposed change in title eroding the perceived specialty status of podiatric surgeons and by association, their level of skill. This would cause consumers to boycott podiatric surgeons and their services, leading to longer consumer waiting times, reduced outcomes and greater strain on families and the healthcare system.

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Myself

Name: Julian Varney

Contact email: [REDACTED]

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**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.

The terms "Podiatry Surgery" and "Podiatry Surgeon" are widely used terms in other English speaking countries; the term is internationally recognised.

The terms & qualification are identical to those used within the UK & are used without confusion within & outside the NHS.

Podiatrists as part of their basic training perform several surgical procedures, e.g., nail surgery, wound debridement, wart excision. The term "surgical podiatrist" could equally apply to a podiatrist performing these minor surgical procedures. The term "Podiatry surgeon" clearly implies a qualification or level of expertise in performing invasive (e.g., bone) procedures in a way that "surgical podiatrist" does not.

**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 see no need for a change in terminology.

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

No clarity for consumers between a Podiatrist performing a minor surgical procedure & a Podiatry Surgeon performing invasive surgery.

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

Lack of clarity regarding their professional expertise.

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

Confusion caused to the public in understanding the difference between a podiatrist performing minor surgical procedures & a Podiatrist trained to perform invasive procedures.