

## Communiqué

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### March and April 2020 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 116th and 117th meetings on Friday 27 March and Friday 24 April 2020 respectively. The Board and its committees have continued to meet by video-conferencing since March 2020. This is a combined communiqué as the release of the March communiqué was rescheduled to accommodate more urgent communications related to COVID-19.

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

#### Support service for dental practitioners

Development of a new independent and anonymous national referral service for dental practitioners and students is now underway. This service will allow practitioners and students to voluntarily access support early. It will provide timely and appropriate information about how to engage with formal supports and/or treatment when required.

The early intervention and prevention service will provide:

- a 24-hour telephone support service
- brief intervention counselling
- health information support, and
- referral services.

The service supports all dental practitioners experiencing personal difficulties and is due to start early July 2020.

#### Adapting National Scheme requirements during COVID-19

High on the agenda for both meetings was discussion and consideration of how the National Board, in its role under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), would respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While National Boards and Ahpra have been working to maintain business continuity and decision-making, we have also been working to implement appropriate regulatory responses to support an emergency health workforce surge and to address other implications for the registered health workforce.

In this context, the Board and Ahpra are continuing to consider how our regulatory requirements can adapt to meet emergency health service needs and support health service delivery while still protecting the public. As an overriding principle, the Board is prepared to be flexible in its approach, however safety remains our first priority.

The Board has released several COVID-19 updates, available on its [website](#). The updates explain the latest information about the restrictions to dental practice and how Ahpra and the Board are responding to the challenges of COVID-19.

Adapting to COVID-19 has resulted in the [pandemic sub register](#), temporary changes to [presenting-in-person requirements](#) and moving to [online upload](#) of all documents by applicants for registration.

Answers to [FAQs](#) on matters such as registration, professional indemnity insurance, financial hardship and registration fees, continuing professional development and other issues can be found in the [Board's updates](#) and on the [Responding to COVID-19](#) portal.

The Board's expectations of dental practitioners remain the same during COVID-19 and practitioners must continue to comply with the Board's [Infection control guidelines](#) and [Code of conduct](#).

In a fast-changing environment, the Board has supported the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee's (AHPPC) recommendations. The Board expects practitioners to keep following the AHPPC's recommendations, the latest being a [move to level 1 restrictions](#), while also checking with their respective state or territory health department for directives that apply to dental practice.

### **National principles for clinical education during COVID-19**

Ahpra and the National Boards, together with the Australian Government and the Health Professions Accreditation Collaborative Forum, have set [national principles for clinical education](#) to guide decisions of professions, accreditation authorities, education providers and health services about student clinical education during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Meanwhile, the Australian Dental Council (ADC), in collaboration with all Australian dental practitioner program providers, has also released the [COVID-19 dental practitioner program accreditation principles](#) to help guide how both groups will work together during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ADC principles are endorsed by the Board and are consistent with the *National principles for clinical education during the COVID-19 pandemic*.

### **COVID-19 Stakeholder Liaison Group**

The Board has convened a COVID-19 Dental Stakeholder Liaison Group to enable and facilitate greater stakeholder collaboration and communication. Meeting the challenges that COVID-19 poses is taking an unwavering commitment across the health sector to shared goals, new levels of collaboration and flexibility. In this, all health sector agencies have both responsibilities and accountabilities. By working together, different parts of the health system can help each other to maintain public safety in an unprecedented environment.

The membership includes representatives from a range of organisations including professional associations, other regulators, accreditation authorities, private and public sectors and the education sector. The group will share information and engage in discussions about issues posed by COVID-19.

### **Revised Scope of practice standard – implementation date 1 July 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced changes to the planned lead up to implementation of the revised *Scope of practice registration standard* which is in effect 1 July 2020.

Stakeholder forums previously planned for each state and territory have been moved to an online format to be delivered as a recorded webinar with a series of live online Q&A sessions. The live sessions together with several resources are to help dental practitioners understand their obligations under the revised standard.

A [‘Know your scope of practice’ website hub](#) has been published and is where practitioners can find information, including a reflective practice tool and FAQs.

The reflective practice tool was developed in consultation with the profession, following a series of focus groups with dental practitioners from all divisions of dental practice.

### **Guideline for dental records – outcome of the review**

In 2019, the Board carried out a review of the *Guidelines for dental records*. The Board carries out regular reviews of all its registration standards, codes, guidelines and policies to ensure continued relevance in a dynamic regulatory environment.

On 20 November 2019, the Board's public consultation paper on the proposed retirement of the dental records guidelines was released. Public consultation concluded in January and [four submissions were](#)

[received](#), which are published on the Board's website together with an overview of the public consultation process.

The Board is going to retire the guidelines as the [Code of conduct](#) contains adequate guidance about health record management. The *Code of conduct* is seen as the seminal document for setting standards and regulatory requirements for dental practitioners. As one of the Board's regulatory tools, the code will therefore be positioned as the main point of guidance for dental practitioners.

A fact sheet and self-reflective tool have been developed and will be published before retirement of the guidelines in the second half of 2020. More information, including resources and a date for retirement of the guidelines, will be published on the Board's website and in its next newsletter.

### **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](http://www.dentalboard.gov.au) or [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

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

Dr Murray Thomas

**Chair, Dental Board of Australia**

15 May 2020