

Communiqué

May and June 2020 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 118th and 119th meetings on Friday 29 May and Friday 26 June 2020 respectively. The Board and its committees have continued to meet by video-conferencing since March 2020.

Also at the May 2020 meeting were the Chairs of the Board's Registration and Notifications Committees, the Dental Council of New South Wales and the New Zealand Dental Council.

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

A nationwide health and wellbeing support service for dental practitioners funded by the Dental Board of Australia will be launched on 6 July. Dental Practitioner Support will be the first national 24/7 telephone and online service for all dental practitioners.

The service, available to dental students, Australian Dental Council exam candidates, educators, employers and concerned family members, will provide confidential and immediate support, advice and referral on a wide range of health and wellbeing related issues. It will run independent of the Board, so dental practitioners can have complete confidence in reaching out for confidential support.

The establishment of Dental Practitioner Support follows the success of a similar service for nurses and midwives that was launched in 2018 and is funded by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

Further information on how to access Dental Practitioner Support will be available on the Board's [website](#) before the service is launched.

Dental Stakeholder Liaison Group – expanded scope

The Board has convened a COVID-19 Dental Stakeholder Liaison Group to enable and facilitate greater stakeholder collaboration and communication. The group was initially convened within an environment where COVID-19 was posing unprecedented challenges to the health system to enable and facilitate greater stakeholder collaboration and communication.

Having embedded new levels of intersectoral collaboration in an unprecedented environment, the function of the group was expanded as there remains an ongoing benefit to continue stakeholder collaboration and communication across the breadth of the Board's regulatory functions. Membership includes representatives from over 10 organisations including professional associations, other regulators, accreditation authorities, private and public sectors and the education sector.

Review of registration standards

Together with other professions, the Board is reviewing a number of its registration standards. The criminal history, English language skills, continuing professional development, recency of practice and the limited registration standards are due for their scheduled five-year review. The reviews will start this year.

Revised Scope of practice standard – in effect 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 were 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 aim 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 to help practitioners understand their obligations under the code and these 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.

Infection control guidelines - review

At the May 2020 meeting, the Board re-initiated its review of the Infection control guidelines. The current context of the global COVID-19 pandemic has had implications for infection control awareness among health practitioners and the general community, as well as increased engagement from practitioners seeking guidance from the Board on infection control related matters. This adds a further dimension to the Board’s review and presents an opportunity to ensure the review has regard to an evolving infection control landscape. In this context, the Board will clearly articulate the rationale for the review and the purpose and role of a Board guideline and any possible changes to the current guidelines and other material. Preliminary consultation will begin late 2020.

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 or 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

7 July 2020