

Communiqué

September and October 2020 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 122nd and 123rd meetings on Thursday 24 September and Thursday 29 October 2020 respectively. The Board and its committees have continued to meet by video conferencing since March 2020.

Also, at the October 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.

Investigations – aligning with our risk and control framework

The National Boards and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) are evolving the way notifications about practitioners are managed. Our aim is to achieve greater regulatory effectiveness and improve the experience for practitioners and notifiers involved in the notifications process.

Investigations have usually focused first on the reported event and then on the practitioner and their response. Applying a risk assessment and control framework, some investigations will see the 'practitioner based' enquiries made sooner. Engagement with practitioners, their representatives and employers during an investigation will also change.

We want to know the actions taken by practitioners and their workplace in response to the concerns raised. We will take action in response to a concern, when the actions of an individual practitioner and/or their workplaces are not sufficient, to ensure we can prevent the same thing happening again.

We can then focus our effort and resources on matters where there are not sufficient risk controls in place to mitigate ongoing risk to the public from the health, performance, or conduct of a practitioner.

In place now, and consistent with the approach taken in assessment, the new approach will apply to current and new low and medium-risk investigations. Matters that raise significant concerns will continue to be prioritised.

More information will be available on the Board and Ahpra websites shortly.

Review of the list of approved overseas qualifications (verbal)

There are several pathways to general registration for dentists with overseas qualifications, including dentists with eligible Bachelor degrees from the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland or New Zealand.

In December 2019 at the Board's planning day, the Board decided to review the list of eligible Bachelor degrees. The review will start in the second half of 2020 to inform a revised and updated list of qualifications in 2021.

Revised scope of practice standard – implementation evaluation

Following extensive consultation, the revised *Scope of practice registration standard* (the standard) and the *Guidelines for scope of practice* (the guidelines) came into effect on 1 July 2020. The implementation of communication, dissemination and awareness strategies began ahead of the 'in effect' date to support a smooth transition.

The Board agreed to evaluate any potential short-term outcomes following implementation of the changes to the standard and guidelines and the effectiveness of the communication strategies in enhancing dental practitioners' understanding of their scope of practice to continue providing safe care to the public, as a member of the dental team. The evaluation will start in the second half of 2021, 12 months after implementation of the revised standard and guidelines.

Review of Guidelines on infection control

The Board carries out regular reviews of its registration standards, codes, guidelines and policies to ensure continued relevance in a dynamic regulatory environment. The *Guidelines on infection control*, in effect from 1 July 2010, are now due for scheduled review. In July 2020, the Board endorsed a set of principles to guide this review. The purpose of the principles is to provide a framework and scope to ground the review and underpin emerging options and outcomes.

Preliminary consultation is due to begin late 2020/early 2021.

Guidelines on dental records – retired 1 October

The *Guidelines on dental records* were retired on 1 October following a review in 2019 and a public consultation that concluded earlier this year.

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

A [fact sheet and self-reflective tool](#) have been published to help practitioners comply with their obligations under the *Code of conduct*.

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. More information on the Board's work is also available in the Board's regular newsletter, with the [July edition](#) now available.

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

Dr Murray Thomas

Chair, Dental Board of Australia

November 2020

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).