

Communiqué

November and December 2020 meetings of the Dental Board of Australia

The Dental Board of Australia (the Board) held its 124th and 125th meetings on Friday 20 November and Friday 11 December 2020 respectively. The Board and its committees continue to meet via video conferencing since March 2020.

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

Annual Board review and planning session

The Board held its annual review and planning session on 10-11 December 2020. It opened with a discussion about the development of a *Supporting professional practice strategy* (the strategy) and the role the Board could play in bringing it to life. Due to be published later in 2021, the draft strategy will intersect with other National Scheme strategic endeavours. The Board agreed to develop an action plan to operationalise the strategy in support of its work.

The Board reflected on the last 12 months and took stock of its achievements in the context of the broader environment; and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

The Board identified new, emerging and ongoing risks relevant to dental practitioner regulation and identified opportunities for improvement. After reflecting on work completed over the past year, the Board then identified its main priorities and planned its work program for next year.

Priorities for 2021–22 include:

- identifying opportunities to build cultural safety and greater engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
- maximising opportunities during the committee restructure to further imbed risk-based regulation
- developing and executing a focused stakeholder engagement strategy to clarify the role and responsibilities of Ahpra and the Board as a regulator
- supporting the development of the draft *Supporting professional practice strategy* and drafting the Board's response to implementing the draft strategy
- best positioning and optimising the outcome of Board policy reviews by strengthening stakeholder and practitioner engagement
- continuing to monitor and respond where appropriate to the environment concerning COVID-19.

Dental Practitioner Support service

The Board was pleased with the successful launch of the Dental Practitioner Support service. Especially as the service was fast-tracked in response to COVID-19. The service has received positive feedback from the dental sector and callers who had used the service. All those who accessed Dental Practitioner Support have reported a positive experience. While not everyone will have an immediate need to use the service, the benefit is having a dedicated support service available, if and when a practitioner needs it.

The Board thanks all its stakeholders, including education providers, dental professional associations, the Australian Dental Council and the Dental Council of New South Wales, who supported the Board's initiative and continue to raise awareness of the service.

The service offers health and wellbeing support to all dental practitioners, including dentists, dental prosthetists, oral health therapists, dental hygienists and dental therapists. It is also available to dental

students, educators, employers, Australian Dental Council exam candidates and concerned family members and friends.

While funded by the Board, the service is run independently by [Turning Point](#), a leading addiction treatment, research and education organisation based in Victoria. This means practitioners can have complete confidence in reaching out for confidential support.

Access Dental Practitioner Support:

- 1800 377 700
- dpsupport.org.au

We ask all our stakeholders to continue to promote the service widely.

Succession planning and 2021 triennial recruitment to the Board

The current terms of all 12 members of the Board, including the Chair, are scheduled to expire in October 2021. These vacancies will be advertised as part of the upcoming triennial recruitment process. The Board redrafted its profile document to express the broad direction for the recruitment strategy and the messaging to be conveyed to potential applicants.

Audit of compliance with registration standards outcomes

Ahpra and the National Boards regularly audit practitioner compliance with mandatory registration standards. Each year Ahpra provides a report on audit outcomes for the previous two years and seeks input and approval from Boards on the coming year's audit scope.

The next audit is due to start in February 2021 for the registration period of 1 December 2019 to 30 November 2020. The Board approved the audit strategy for 2021. It noted the high compliance levels by dental practitioners against the assessed standards for the previous audit period.

Presenting in person (PIP) timeframe extension

COVID-19 significantly disrupted international travel in 2020, and this is likely to continue into 2021. This will further delay the opportunity for overseas-qualified practitioners who have applied for registration with the Board to enter Australia and satisfy their present in person identification check requirements to complete the registration process. National Boards have approved the ongoing flexible application of some registration requirements for such applicants. More information about [presenting in person requirements](#) is available on the [Ahpra website](#).

Advance copies of revised advertising guidelines and enforcement strategy

On 17 November 2020, National Boards and Ahpra published advance copies of the revised *Guidelines for advertising a regulated health service* (the guidelines) along with advance copies of an updated *Advertising compliance and enforcement strategy for the National Scheme* (the strategy) and an overview of the evaluation of the previous strategy. These are available on the Ahpra website's [Advertising hub](#).

The advance copy of the guidelines and strategy were published to give advertisers and other stakeholders an opportunity to become familiar with the new guidance before it comes into effect on Monday 14 December 2020.

National Scheme Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy

The Ahpra *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2020–2025* (the employment strategy) was launched on 9 November at the start of NAIDOC Week and is a key deliverable for the National Scheme's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020–2025*.

The employment strategy's goal is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation within Ahpra by developing a culturally safe work environment, that reflects the diversity of the communities we operate in and serve.

The employment strategy contains five priority areas to help achieve our goal:

- Build a sustainable talent pipeline through attraction and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

- Implement programs and culturally safe work practices which foster the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.
- Invest in developing the capabilities and careers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, including representation in leadership and senior roles.
- Develop culturally safe workplaces through education and culturally safe work practices.
- Know the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce throughout Ahpra to encourage their engagement in the delivery of the employment strategy and goals.

The [employment strategy](#) is available on the Ahpra website.

Committee restructure

The Board identified in its 2019/2020 regulatory workplan that it would revisit its registration and notifications committee structure. Immediate action and assessment matters were identified as the first to transition to a national structure. They had already been tested and posed the least disruption to committee operations. Both have now been moved to a national structure with registration, notifications (beyond assessment) and compliance matters next to be moved as the final step in the reorganisation.

This will see the establishment of a national:

- Registration and Compliance Committee (RCC) (compliance matters related to registration decisions), and
- Notifications and Compliance Committee (NCC) (notification matters beyond assessment and compliance matters related to notifications).

An expression of interest for appointment to these committees was sought from all existing committee members with appointments approved in December. These committees will be in effect from 1 February 2021.

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. Read the latest edition, [October 2020](#).

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

Dr Murray Thomas

Chair, Dental Board of Australia

January 2021