

Snapshot of the public consultation on the proposed change to the protected title for the specialty of podiatric surgery

Who is the Podiatry Board of Australia?

The Podiatry Board of Australia (the Board) protects the public by regulating podiatrists and podiatric surgeons. As part of its role, the Board develops registration standards that define the requirements for podiatrists to be registered and develops codes and guidelines that provide guidance to the profession.

What is happening?

The Board is seeking feedback on a proposal to change the protected title for the specialty of podiatric surgery.

What is the Board proposing?

The Board is proposing to change the protected title for the specialty from 'podiatric surgeon' to an alternative title, such as 'surgical podiatrist'.

What does this mean for consumers?

The Board wants to strengthen public protection and the effectiveness of regulation for the specialty of podiatric surgery. Ensuring that consumers have access to clear information about a practitioner is the first step in helping consumers make informed decisions about their health care.

Before a consumer consults a health practitioner in relation to a health issue, it is important they know from the outset what type of practitioner will be providing their care. This is particularly important if the consumer is considering undergoing surgery due to its potential to cause serious injury or harm. In the context of podiatric surgery, it must be clear to the consumer the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist, and not a specialist medical practitioner.

Why is the Board proposing this change?

In October 2023, the Board and Ahpra commissioned an independent review of the regulation of podiatric surgeons. The final report, which was published on 27 March 2024 made 14 recommendations that were all accepted by the Board and Ahpra. Recommendation 4 from the review is that: following consultation, the Podiatry Board seek Health Ministers' approval to change the protected title for the specialty from 'podiatric surgeon' to an alternative title, such as 'surgical podiatrist'.

The review concluded that continued use of the title 'podiatric surgeon' is confusing and problematic. The independent reviewer recommended that the title be changed to an alternative title such as 'surgical podiatrist' to make it clear that the practitioner is a specialist podiatrist who performs surgery.

The Board accepted the review's findings and agreed to consult on a change to the protected title to reduce consumer confusion about the type of practitioner they are seeing and their qualifications and training. In turn this is expected to improve the ability of consumers to make informed decisions when seeking specialist advice about foot and ankle problems.

The Board accepted this recommendation in principle, noting that it does not have the authority to change the protected specialist title. The National Law prescribes that, if specialist registration operates for a health profession, the Ministerial Council (Health Ministers) may on the recommendation of the Board approve a specialist title/s for each listed specialty.

To implement this recommendation, the Board is now consulting on a proposed change to the protected title.

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Where do I get more information?

Please refer to the public consultation paper available in [the current consultations section of the Board's website](#).

How to make a submission?

Please use the submission template to provide your feedback and email the completed template to: podiatryconsultation@ahpra.gov.au.

The public consultation closes on **8 November 2024**.