

MEET THE BOARD

Dr Mark Leedham	Chair
Dr Owen Hales	Member
Dr Neil Lanceley	Member
Dr Chris Kaiplinger	Member
Ms Belinda Simons	Member
Ms Diane Walsh	Public Member
Ms Joanna Albert	Public Member

BOARD SUPPORT

Ms Jill Huck	Registrar
Ms Vicki Skopellos	A/Policy & Research
Ms Julie Burrows	Registrations

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2008. Another exciting and challenging year ahead is anticipated by the Board.

The Board has continued to work towards providing guidance to Dentists in the interest of ensuring maintenance of quality health care in the Northern Territory.

I strongly encourage all Dentists to develop an understanding of the *Health Practitioners Act* and familiarise themselves with the Board's policies and guidelines.

I hope this Newsletter provides assistance and guidance in your day-to-day practice as well as an understanding of the current and potential changes in regulation of Dentists in Australia. Please contact the Board if you have items of interest you would like the Board to address in Newsletters.

Best Wishes
Mark Leedham (Chair)

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

The following policies have been changed or developed in the last financial year:

- Code of Practice for Dental Therapists and Dental Hygienists
- Public Dental Workforce Scheme Conditional Registration Policy
- Registration as a Dental Specialist

SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING DATES

Please note that applications for registration and other information that is to be considered at a Board meeting must be received no less

than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting date.

The Board cannot guarantee that documents received after this date will be addressed at the next scheduled meeting. Late documents will be assessed for the level of urgency. Should your matter be urgent please contact the Board as soon as possible.

Remaining meeting dates currently scheduled for 2008:

15 August, 3 October and 12 December

COAG - NATIONAL REGISTRATION & ACCREDITATION

Notification has been received from the Commonwealth regarding the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement that establishes the national registration and accreditation scheme for the health professions, including dentistry and oral health, which is to commence on 1 July 2010.

As previously advised the new arrangements will achieve national regulation and accreditation of the following nine professional groups:

Dental (Dentists, Dental Specialists, Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists, Prosthetists); Medical Practitioners; Nurses & Midwives; Osteopaths; Pharmacists; Physiotherapists; Optometrists; Chiropractors and Psychologists.

At this point in time it is projected that Occupational Therapists, Aboriginal Health Workers and Radiographers will continue to be regulated under current Northern Territory legislation.

In 2007, the Chairs of the Northern Territory Regulatory Boards forwarded a number of submissions to the COAG Health Working Group and the NT Government. The Dental Board, through the Health Practitioner Registration Board Chairs, provided input into the proposed model by written submissions to the Health Working Group.

The Board awaits further information from COAG in relation to progressing this issue.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR DENTAL PROSTHETISTS

The Dental Board has developed a Code of Practice for Dental Prosthetists. The Code came into effect in April 2008 and has been developed to provide a framework for the practice of dentistry by prosthetists.

Requirements

Registered Dental Prosthetists must possess the competencies set out in the Advanced Diploma of Dental Prosthetics accredited, under the Health Training Package, by the Australian National Training Authority and have successfully completed a course of study approved by the Board as appropriate for registration as a Dental Prosthetist.

A copy of the Code of Practice for Dental Prosthetists can be obtained from the Health Professions Licensing Authority web site on www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards.

MANDATORY REPORTING

The role and scope of child protection activity is primarily prescribed by the principal child protection Acts in each Australian jurisdiction.

The relevant Northern Territory legislation is the: ***Care and Protection of Children Act 2007***

Division 3 General obligations reporting

1 Reporting obligations

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if the person:
 - (a) believes, on reasonable grounds, that a child:
 - (i) has been or is likely to be a victim of a sexual offence; or
 - (ii) otherwise has suffered or is likely to suffer harm or exploitation; and
 - (b) does not, as soon as possible after forming that belief, report (orally or in writing) to the CEO or a police officer:
 - (i) that belief; and
 - (ii) any knowledge of the person forming the grounds for that belief; and
 - (iii) any factual circumstances on which that knowledge is based.

Maximum penalty: 200 penalty units.

2 Protection of person making report

- (1) A person acting in good faith in making a report under section 1(1) is not civilly or criminally liable, or in breach of any professional code of conduct:

- (a) for making the report; or
 - (b) for disclosing any information in the report.

- (2) In any proceedings before a court, except with the court's leave:

- (a) the report or evidence of its contents is not admissible; and
 - (b) a person cannot be compelled to give evidence, or to produce a record, about the report or the identity of the maker of the report.

- (3) The leave may be granted only if:

- (a) the report, evidence or record is of critical importance to the proceedings; and
 - (b) failure to grant the leave would prejudice the proper administration of justice.

KNOW YOUR ACT

Dentists and 9 other health profession groups are regulated under the *Health Practitioners Act* in the Northern Territory. The purpose of the Act is to ensure public protection.

Annual Practising Certificates (APC) 40(2)

A practising certificate is evidence that until the due date, or the date determined by the Board (a) the health practitioner is authorised to practice in the Territory. **Most APC expire 30 September each year.**

Always keep your APC in a secure place and check it for the following:

- date on which your APC expires;
- accuracy of information on your APC; and
- conditions (if applicable) listed on the APC.

Please contact the Board immediately if the details on your APC are incorrect.

Those practitioners with conditional registration must ensure they are compliant with the conditions, to do otherwise is a breach of the legislation and may lead to a review of registration pursuant to s30 of the *Health Practitioners Act*.

Practising Unlicensed

Practising unlicensed is a breach of Section 101 (1)(b) of the *Health Practitioners Act* and is: a risk to patients and practitioners; may impact on entitlement to Medicare rebates; and may alter indemnification arrangements.

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Should you find yourself in this situation, it is in the best interest of your patients, yourself and your employer to rectify the situation immediately.

Please note it is the practitioner's responsibility to ensure that they hold current registration the *Health Practitioners Act* does not have the capacity to provide registration retrospectively.

S46 Notice of change of name or address

A health practitioner must, within 30 days of changing his or her name, personal address or business address, give the relevant Board notice in writing of the change and the new name or address, as the case may be.

Failing to update the Board with changes of name / address details means that you will not receive any correspondence from the Board. In effect this means you will miss the opportunity:

- keep up with changes to policy;
- receive newsletters; and
- receive the application to renew your registration.

The Board seeks your assistance in ensuring that the name and contact details maintained on the database are current.

S111 Unconscionable conduct

A person must not, either directly or indirectly, attempt to influence, coerce or otherwise cause a health practitioner to conduct or provide a health service that does not comply with the standards contained in the code applying to the Dentists.

S117 Employer Notice of Misconduct or Incompetence

If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the practitioner's employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person must provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the Board and to the practitioner.

S118 Protection from Liability

This section applies to a person who; makes a complaint; provides the Board with information; assists the Board with a preliminary investigation (including an assessment report or opinion); assists or provides information under Part 6; or assists or provides information

to the Tribunal. This person is not civilly or criminally liable for an act done by the person in good faith in taking an action referred to above.

CONDUCT
Performance or Competence Assessment

There were no investigations of possible unsatisfactory professional performance and no assessments of competence conducted in this period.

Conduct Statistics
1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007

Total conduct matters considered or otherwise dealt with by the Board	8
New matters notified in this period	4
Part 4 Investigations	2
Tribunal	0
Number of complaints finalised	3
Notifications of possible impairment	0
Monitored impaired practitioners	2

Registration Statistics

As at **30 June 2007** the total number of registrants included:

91 Dentists
18 Dental Specialists
11 Dental Hygienists
26 Dental Therapists
2 Dental Prosthetists

Annual Renewal of Registration

Renewal of Registration forms are posted to registrants in August annually, forms will also be available from this office or the Board's website. Please note non-receipt of a renewal notice is not an acceptable reason for practising unlicensed. It is important to note that non-receipt of a renewal notice is most often linked to the registrant's failure to notify the Board of a change of address.

Employers are reminded to ensure they have sound processes in place to ensure all dentists and other regulated health profession employees hold current registration, at the time of commencing employment and by the renewal date each year.

Contact Details

Dental Board of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 4221
DARWIN NT 0801
Telephone +61 8 8999 4157
Fax +61 8 8999 4196
Email healthprofessions.ths@nt.gov.au