



POSITION STATEMENT ON SCOPE OF PRACTICE

In August 2004, the Board distributed to major stakeholders a discussion paper which advised the following:

1. legislative changes had occurred as a result of the commencement of the *Health Legislation Amendment Act 2003* on 1 July 2004;
2. the Board was investigating extending the current scope of practice for both dental prosthetists and dental technicians.
3. no registrants would be permitted to undertake any additional scope of practice unless the Board has approved this additional scope; and
4. no registrant would be permitted to undertake any additional scope of practice unless they could prove to the Board that they had been adequately educated and trained in this additional scope of practice.

Whilst it is true that there are somewhat less legislative restrictions placed on dental technicians than on dental prosthetists under the new legislative framework, it is important to note the following points:

1. all dental prosthetists are also dental technicians under the registration of the Board.
2. changes are not designed to create a situation where dental technicians and dental prosthetists are in competition with each other. The anticipated changes improve the scope of practice for both professions;
3. additional scope of practice for dental technicians will be undertaken only after the necessary education and training has been conducted. This education and training will better qualify dental technicians. Those wishing to advance to areas in dental prosthetics should consider upgrading to the level of a dental prosthetist; and
4. similar legislative changes in the *Dental Registration Act 2001* have led to other members of the oral health professions receiving extended scopes of practice and the two professions registered under this Board should keep pace with changes in these other professions.

Please note:

1. at this stage no changes have been made to the current practice for both professions.
2. that no additional scope of practice work can be undertaken by registrants unless approved by the Board; and
3. the Board and its Scope of Practice Committee will finalise all these matters and advise registrants in the first half of 2007 of the outcomes of its deliberations.

General registration with supervisory conditions

In 2004, graduates of Southbank TAFE were issued with Diploma qualifications after 18 months of study. Previously, graduates did not receive a Diploma until they had undergone a period of industry training. As a result, the Board registered recent graduates with supervisory conditions for 12 months.

These graduates were given a foundation year manual to complete in conjunction with their supervisor and return to the Board at the end of the 12 month period so that the supervisory conditions can be removed from their registration. The Board has received advice that some employers / supervisors are refusing to complete the foundation year manual.

The Board wishes to remind all employers / supervisors of these graduates that they are obliged to complete the foundation year manual even if the graduate only works with the employer / supervisor for part of the year.

Professional conduct

The Board is developing a *Guide to Good Practice* (available for comment and viewing on the Board's website) for reference by registrants.

This document, when finalised, can be used in legal proceedings which may arise against registrants for unprofessional conduct.

Registrants should treat this document as a reference tool for themselves, their practice and their staff. It outlines acceptable practice in a number of areas though it is not all encompassing on matters of professional misconduct.

Background

In August 2004, the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board of Queensland formed a Scope of Practice Committee which considered the legislative amendments enacted on 1 July 2004 to the *Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetist Registration Act 2001*. The Committee took into account changes which had occurred to the definition of dentistry contained with the *Dental Registration Act 2001*.

The Committee developed a scope of practice discussion paper which major stakeholders reviewed.



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The Board Chair and the Assistant Registrar met with the following organisations in late 2004 to consult and develop support networks relating to scope of practice:

1. Oral Health Unit – Queensland Health.
2. Legislative Projects Unit – Queensland Health; and
3. Southbank TAFE.

The Board Chair conducted seminars on the issue in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton and Hervey Bay. Seminars will be conducted in Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and western Queensland.

This policy statement will provide information to registrants on the immediate impact of changes to scope of practice and future advances in this area.

Legislation

The key areas regarding legislative changes are:

1. dental technicians have had all practice restriction removed from the ACT and any definitions of dental technology practice also have been removed.

In the above legislative situation, what determines practice is:

- a) the education and qualifications undertaken by the registrant; and
- b) on the proviso that the practice undertaken does not breach professional boundaries of other professions which do have practice restrictions and definitions in their legislation (ie. dentists and the definition of dentistry).

2. there is a definition in the ACT which cover a dental prosthetic service which reads:

Part 4 Division 1a 124a (1)

Dental Prosthetics Services - of the fitting of an artificial denture into a healthy person's mouth without adjusting or altering the natural teeth or tissue in the mouth.

The Committee has determined that this definition should be interpreted as:

Dental Prosthetics Services – is the fitting of an oral appliance into a person where the mouth is observed to be free of disease, damage or abnormality, without having adjusted or altered the natural teeth, tissue or Temporo-mandibular joint .

The action of providing a dental prosthetics service should not diminish the present condition of the mouth. Any potential adverse conditions are required to be referred to a shared care arrangement between the dental prosthetist and the appropriate dentist or dental specialist.

The Committee in its discussion paper outlined two major points:

1. Whether dental technicians wishing to educate and train to be able to perform additional scopes of practice should be forced by this policy to undertake the upgrade to a dental prosthetist. Should this apply to all the additional scopes of practice which were listed in the discussion paper?
2. The discussion paper raised the following as potential additional disciplines to be performed by dental technicians and dental prosthetists:

Dental technology proposed disciplines:

1. bleaching trays;
2. impression taking;
3. study models;
4. mouth guards;
5. aspects of maxillofacial / medical prosthetics / medical appliance construction;
6. shade taking; and
7. denture repairs.

Dental prosthetics proposed disciplines:

1. immediate dentures;
2. removable orthodontic appliances eg Hawley, thumb sucking, tongue thrusting;
3. tissue conditioning;
4. implant supported dentures;
5. over dentures;
6. scale and polishing;
7. fluoride trays;
8. dental X-rays; and
9. bruxism splints.



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Policy statement

Taking into account the legislative definitions and advancement in education and training by Griffith University and Southbank TAFE (still under discussion), the Committee recommends that all additional disciplines listed above be approved for an expanded scope of practice.

However, until such time as the Board assigns and approves a description and education/training level requirement, work in the above areas cannot be undertaken. Board-approved practice in these areas of the profession can be undertaken where appropriate education and training has been authorised by the Board. The Board will advise the approved courses through educational providers.

The Board will ensure release occurs on appropriate workplace health and safety standards and infection control guidelines to coincide with the introduction of these additional disciplines. At the time that these additional disciplines can be undertaken, registrants are requested to review their professional indemnity insurance status.