
News Bulletin

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board of Queensland

December 2003

ADDRESS FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON –Mr Brian Jeffries

Welcome to this issue of the Board's News Bulletin. The Board has determined that due to much confusion amongst practitioners over recent proposed legislative changes, it is important to confirm the position of Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists in relation to the certainty of their registration.

I ask all Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists to read this News Bulletin carefully and also bring its content to the attention of other members of the Oral Health family (eg. Dentists and Laboratory Owners). The Board is of the opinion that through cooperation between the practitioners and professionals in the Oral Health sector, we can advance all professions and improve accessibility to care for the Public and ensure that the care provided is performed by suitably registered and qualified practitioners.

On a more general point, the Board is very appreciative of those registrants from the Townsville region who met with Board members on 20 June 2003. Together we explored many interesting points of concern to the professions and also discussed the exciting opportunities that lay ahead for the Board and all registered practitioners. The Board was most impressed with the dedication, concern and willingness to learn of those practitioners it met in Townsville. This indicates that the profession in Northern Queensland is in good hands.

The issues contained in this newsletter relate to:

- *Title restriction not de-registration.*
- *Code of Practice.*
- *Online access to "The Register".*
- *Fitting of Anti-Snore devices.*
- *Education Committee.*
- *Next meeting of the Board with practitioners.*

TITLE RESTRICTION NOT DE-REGISTRATION

Legislation relating to Health Practitioners throughout Australia and through all professions has changed or is currently undergoing change as a result of the National Competition Policy.

There are generally three legislative models used by legislators in relation to Health

Practitioner Registration. These models are: 1. Practice restriction only; 2. Combined Title restriction and Practice restriction; and 3. Title restriction only.

Model 2 is used in the current Act - the *Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001* - which regulates Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists and also the practice of dental technical work and the provision of dental prosthetic services.

Under the current Act, [and its predecessor - the *Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Act 1991*]:

- a person who is not a registered Dental Technician cannot perform dental technical work for fee or reward; or use the title “Dental Technician” or any other title, name, symbol, word or description that could reasonably be understood to indicate the person is a Dental Technician.
- a person who is not a registered Dental Prosthetist cannot provide dental prosthetic services for fee or reward; or use the title “Dental Prosthetist” or any other title, name, symbol, word or description that could reasonably be understood to indicate the person is a Dental Prosthetist.

This situation is about to change due to a new Act called the *Health Legislation Amendment Act 2003* which was introduced into Queensland Parliament on 3 June 2003 and passed by the Parliament on 15 October 2003. That Act amends various health practitioner registration Acts including the *Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001*. Those changes are not yet law. They do not become law until declared by proclamation.

The changes incorporated in the *Health Legislation Amendment Act 2003* mirror recommendations from a review of core practices of various health professions. In essence, those recommendations were that title restrictions should be retained but practice restrictions should only apply in relation to practices which pose a high risk of harm to the public.

As a consequence, the Amendment Act includes amendments to the *Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Registration Act 2001* that involve the following:

- For Dental Technicians:
 - retention of the title restrictions, so that only a registered Dental Technician may use the title “Dental Technician”; and
 - removal of restrictions on the practice of dental technology.
- For Dental Prosthetists:
 - retention of the title restrictions, so that only a registered Dental Prosthetist may use the title “Dental Prosthetist”; and
 - retention of a practice restriction on the provision of dental prosthetic services.

Under the practice restriction on the provision of dental prosthetic services, only Dental

Prosthetists, Dentists and Medical Practitioners will be permitted to fit “an artificial denture into a healthy mouth without adjusting or altering the natural teeth or tissue in the mouth”.

Under the title restrictions, there will continue to be certainty for registrants that only appropriately qualified and competent practitioners will be registered and practicing in Queensland.

In addition, there is no change to the current “holding out” offences which prevent non-registrants from knowingly misrepresenting themselves as a Dental Technician or Dental Prosthetist. Penalties of up to \$75,000 exist for such offences.

Nonetheless, there are obviously concerns within the professions, and particularly among Dental Technicians, that the removal of the restriction on the performance of dental technical work will allow untrained and unskilled persons to perform dental technical work.

To allay this concern, Codes of Practice are to be developed. These are outlined in the following section of this News Bulletin.

CODE OF PRACTICE

The Minister for Health has directed both the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board and the Dental Board to develop “Codes of Practice” under section 13 of the *Health Practitioners (Professional Standards) Act 1999*.

By such Codes, the professions which belong to the family of “Oral Health” will cooperate in ensuring that relevant competencies and standards are maintained and that Dental Prosthetists and Dentists will source dental technical products from appropriately qualified and skilled staff.

The Board thanks the Minister for this opportunity to work with the Dental Board in developing joint areas of “Codes of Practice” for the professions. These codes are to be presented to the Minister by 31 March 2004 and as a result a consultation document will be circulated in early 2004 to all registrants and stakeholders.

ONLINE ACCESS TO THE REGISTER

To enable applicants, practitioners, employers and the general public to be aware of the status of registrants, the Board has made available online access to the Register. In the case of Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists, this can be found at the following address on the Internet.

www.dtanddpboard.qld.gov.au

Under point 8, click on Public Access and you will be able to check the registration of

practitioners. You will of course need to select separately the registers for Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists. For practitioners it is worth checking that your details are listed correctly on this site.

FITTING OF ANTI SNORE DEVICES

From information the Board has received regarding the fitting of the anti snore device, the Board advises on evidence given to it, that:

- the fitting of any snoring devices should not be undertaken by persons other than a specialist dentist and specialist medical practitioner,
- the criteria being that benefits for dentists are payable but require a written referral from a respiratory physician before the benefit is paid;
- a high percentage of patients treated with snoring devices experience side effects.

In reply to health funds seeking clarification on this matter, the Board has advised that at this present time, legislation does not permit Dental Prosthetists to fit the anti snore device.

The Dental Board and the Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board are currently investigating a practice for the fitting of these devices that is contrary to the policies of both Boards.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Board's Education Committee has met 7 times since December 2002. The Committee is made up of representatives from the following industry groups:

- Board members
- Australian Dental Laboratories
- Griffith University
- Southbank TAFE
- Dental Technicians Association
- Dental Prosthetists Association

The Committee is primarily focused on assisting in advancing the education available in Queensland for Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists. The Committee and the Board have been working very closely to maintain the high standards in the education provided by Southbank TAFE and have been also liaising closely with Griffith University on the degree courses for Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists proposed to commence at under graduate level in 2004.

This year the Committee dealt with a concern regarding a reduction from 3 years to 18 months in the course time for the Diploma of Dental Technology at Southbank TAFE. In an effort to ensure that the graduates were of a satisfactory standard, the Committee in consultation with the Board and Southbank TAFE has arranged that these graduates will be required to undertake a 12-month conditional registration period during which time they will be required to be supervised.

The Committee and Board hope that practitioners support this initiative and seek to provide this supervision and industry training to help provide quality practitioners for the future. Any practitioners who have views on the Education standards or wish to comment on the supervision of graduates should send their comments to:

Executive Officer

Dental Technicians and Dental Prosthetists Board of Queensland

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BRISBANE QLD 4000

BOARD MEETING WITH PRACTITIONERS

Owing to the success of the Board's meeting with registrants in Townsville in June 2003, the Board will be hosting a similar event in Brisbane on Wednesday 24 March 2004, which will coincide with the National Conference of Dental Technology and Dental Prosthetists Registration Boards of Australia and New Zealand (CORA) on 25- 26 March 2004 to be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Brisbane.

Further details regarding this meeting will be supplied in February 2004.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Practitioners should be aware that the Board at all times is prepared to receive and consider correspondence from its registrants. This Board seeks and encourages a participative role by Practitioners in the professions of Dental Technology and Dental Prosthetics in assisting to develop our industry.