

# Strategic Plan:

## 2015 – 2020

Dental Council

Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho

---

## Our vision

---

Safe oral health care for New Zealand.

## Our purpose

---

To protect public health and safety by ensuring oral health professionals are safe, competent and fit to practise.

## Our values

---

- The interests of patients and the public come first
  - Fairness and consistency
  - Integrity
  - Transparency
  - Responsiveness
  - Independence
-

# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the Dental Council's strategic direction for the period 2015 – 2020. It is intended to:

- provide a guiding framework for what we will do over the next five years and how we will do it
- set out where we will focus our particular attention
- signal our priorities to our stakeholders, including oral health practitioners, users of oral health care services, and the wider public
- provide a basis against which we can measure progress in achieving our intentions.

While our purpose and vision are set for the long term, our priorities and actions are designed to respond to the changing environment and new opportunities.

## From goals to outcomes

This document is a shift in our approach to strategic planning. Most significantly, we have modified our strategic focus from corporate goals to the outcomes that the professions and the public can expect from our activities as a regulator.

The Strategic Plan should be read in conjunction with our current annual plan, which sets out the specific activities Council will undertake over the next 12 months to advance the priorities outlined in this document.

# About the Dental Council

The Dental Council is a “responsible authority” created by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. We are part of a system of independent regulators tasked with protecting the health and safety of the public of New Zealand by ensuring that health professionals are competent and fit to practise.

The practitioners we regulate are dentists, dental specialists, dental therapists, dental hygienists, clinical dental technicians, dental technicians and orthodontic auxiliaries.

## What we do

Our functions are set out in section 118 of the Act. Put simply, our core responsibilities are:

- Setting the standards for clinical and cultural competence, and ethical conduct, to be met by all oral health professionals, before and after they enter the register.
- Prescribing qualifications and accrediting education programmes so that graduates have the necessary competencies and attributes to be registered practitioners.
- Registration and recertification of oral health professionals so that only those with the skills, competencies and fitness to provide safe and ethical care are able to practise in New Zealand.
- Ensuring ongoing competence and fitness to practise of registered oral health professionals, investigating their conduct or health where there are concerns about performance, and taking appropriate action to protect the safety of the public.

## How we work

The Act provides us with legal powers to set and enforce the standards that the public have a right to expect of oral health practitioners in New Zealand. [Our overriding concern is the health and safety of the public, not to protect the interests of practitioners.](#) Where action is required in the public interest, we will take it.

However, we also have an obligation to practitioners to perform our functions in ways that are consistent, fair, and proportionate. Our aim is simple: to use the minimum regulatory force required to achieve the best outcomes for the public.

To that end, we work with employers, educators, professional associations, other regulators, practitioners, patients and the public to find the most effective and efficient ways to ensure oral health professionals practise competently and safely.

## Our values and principles

Our values and principles provide a framework for everything we do. They define who we are and what our stakeholders can expect from us.

### Our values

- The interests of patients and the public come first
- Fairness and consistency
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Responsiveness
- Independence

### Our principles

- We are a “right touch regulator” – regulation of the professions is proportionate, consistent and targeted.
- We focus on outcomes.
- We are clear about our mandate and purpose and apply our resources accordingly.
- We hold ourselves to high standards of efficiency, effectiveness and quality and accountability.
- We work with partners, locally and internationally, to increase our effectiveness.
- We actively seek the views of practitioners, the public and other groups committed to the quality and safety of oral health care.
- We ensure our actions reflect the changing environment and societal expectations.

# Our Strategic Direction: 2015 to 2020

Over a decade has passed since the HPCA Act was introduced into legislation. While the Act itself has changed little in that time, the wider environment in which oral health professionals are practising – politically, economically, socially, and culturally – continues to evolve.

In 2014, we undertook a review of our strategic direction to make sure that what we are doing, and how we are doing it, is responsive to contemporary concerns.

As a consequence, we adopted a new strategic framework to guide our activities over the next five years. The framework sets out the vision and outcomes we want to achieve and our five strategic priorities. These priorities have been selected by Council as the areas needing particular attention if we are to be effective in the dynamic world around us.

## Why a strategic framework?

The environment for oral health care is changing. There are many exciting developments on the horizon, with rapid advancements in technology and treatment. But there are also challenges to navigate. Our objective is to ensure that standards, competencies, dental education, scopes of practice and enforcement measures are sufficiently robust and responsive to assure public safety remains protected in the years ahead.

A strategic framework provides an anchor to make certain that we are focusing our actions on those things that will have the greatest positive impact for the public, without creating undue financial or regulatory burden on practitioners.

## Our vision

Our vision for 2020 is:

*Safe oral health care for New Zealand.*

# Our strategic framework



Long-term outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The public can trust that they will receive safe and professional oral health care.</li> <li>Oral health practitioners are safe, competent and fit to practise their professions.</li> <li>Regulation of oral health practitioners is proportionate, fair, transparent and durable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The public has confidence in the regulation of oral health practitioners.</li> <li>Entrants to the Dental Register have the competence and fitness to practise safely and independently.</li> <li>Registered oral health practitioners understand and apply standards of safety, clinical and cultural competence and ethical conduct.</li> <li>Oral health practitioners maintain lifelong competence.</li> <li>Action to address practitioner safety, fitness, competence or conduct concerns is timely, fair, proportionate and effective.</li> <li>The regulatory system is understood and upheld by our other stakeholders.</li> </ul>

### Strategic priorities

- Standards:** Complete and embed standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct.
- Engagement:** Grow understanding of, and engagement with, the Dental Council.
- Lifelong practitioner competence:** Introduce an effective, quality assured framework for ongoing practitioner competence.
- A capable organisation:** Ensure we have the policies, systems, skills and processes to deliver our functions – smarter, more consistently and in accordance with our principles and values.
- Governance:** Review and refresh our governance model.

Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are a “right touch regulator” – regulation of the professions is proportionate, consistent and targeted.</li> <li>We focus on outcomes.</li> <li>We are clear about our mandate and apply our resources accordingly.</li> <li>We hold ourselves to high standards of efficiency, effectiveness, quality and accountability.</li> <li>We work with partners, locally and internationally, to increase our effectiveness.</li> <li>We actively seek the views of practitioners, the public and other groups committed to the quality and safety of oral health care.</li> <li>We ensure our actions reflect the changing environment and societal expectations.</li> </ul>				
Values	Fairness and consistency	Integrity	Transparency	Responsiveness	Independence
The interests of patients and public come first					

## Our strategic priorities

Strategic priorities are areas of activity that will help bridge the gap between where we are now and what we need to achieve. They help strike a balance between resourcing our day-to-day operational activities, and putting sufficient energy into areas that will drive improvements in our effectiveness and efficiency.

Five priorities have been selected by Council. The strategic priorities are reviewed by Council each year for relevance, and refreshed if needed.

The five strategic priorities are:

1. **Standards:** Complete and embed standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct.
2. **Engagement:** Grow understanding of, and engagement with, the Dental Council.
3. **Lifelong practitioner competence:** Introduce an effective, quality assured framework for ongoing practitioner competence.
4. **A capable organisation:** Ensure we have the policies, systems, skills and processes to deliver our functions – smarter, more consistently and in accordance with our principles and values.
5. **Governance:** Review and refresh our governance model.

The priorities do not cover everything we plan to do over the next five years, nor do they include much of our 'business as usual' activities. The priorities are the areas of activity which are of particular significance for delivering our strategy.

Over time, these priorities will change to meet new opportunities, challenges and circumstances.

## Objectives and timeframes

Under each strategic priority, one or more objectives are identified. The objectives define what we want to accomplish by prioritising that area. They represent steps along the journey to achieving our purpose and outcomes.

Some of the priorities will take the lifetime of this Strategic Plan to realise, while others will be completed much more quickly.

# Strategic Priority 1: Standards

Complete and embed standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct.

The HPCA Act 2003 makes the setting of standards of clinical competence, cultural competence, and ethical conduct, a function of the Dental Council.

The standards we set provide the minimum bar (threshold) for competence and acceptable behaviour that registered practitioners must meet if public safety is to be protected. We are the only organisation with the legal authority to set these standards for oral health practitioners in New Zealand.

In 2014, Council commenced development of a Standards Framework, setting out the standards of ethical conduct, and clinical and cultural competence, that patients and the public can expect from registered oral health practitioners. The Standards Framework document is also intended to provide clarity to practitioners about the standards they must meet.

Establishing the Standards Framework is only the first step. There is still work to do for all practitioners to become aware of the standards and have the right guidance to comply with them. Practice standards must also be current and relevant, and systems introduced to ensure this remains so.

## Objectives

- i. The Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners is established.
  - ii. Practice standards are current and relevant.
  - iii. Oral health practitioners understand the purpose of the Standards Framework and comply with it.
-

# Strategic Priority 2: Engagement

## Grow understanding of, and engagement with, the Dental Council.

The purpose of the Dental Council is to protect public health and safety.

As a ‘right touch regulator’ we seek to do this in a way that is proportionate, consistent and targeted in regulating oral health care practice. This means we can’t work alone. In many of our activities we require the participation of our stakeholders: practitioners, patients and the public, educators, employers, professional associations and other responsible authorities.

This is truer now than ever. Societal expectations of health care, of practitioners, and of regulators is changing rapidly. We need to understand and engage with the views of our stakeholders, and encourage people to have a say about our work. At the same time, we need to do more to explain the breadth and limits of our responsibilities. It is not possible for the public to have confidence in the regulatory system, or for practitioners to see the value in annual fees, if we are invisible.

Anecdotal reports suggest a gap in real understanding about the role and purpose of the Dental Council. Addressing this gap is a critical area for Council – integrally connected to achieving our other priorities.

### Objectives

- i. The public understands the role of the Dental Council, and has greater input into our work.
  - ii. Oral health practitioners understand the role of Council in regulating their professions.
  - iii. Other stakeholders understand the role and purpose of the Dental Council.
-

## Strategic Priority 3: Lifelong practitioner competence

Introduce an effective, quality assured framework for ongoing practitioner competence.

The HPCA Act 2003 requires that registered practitioners be recertified on an annual basis. Recertification is the mechanism by which the Dental Council assures the public that practitioners continue to have the competence to practise.

At present, recertification for oral health practitioners is a one-size-fits-all process, linked to completion of Continuing Professional Development hours and peer contact. The Dental Council is of the view that a smarter and more robust approach to recertification is needed if public safety is to be assured. For example, a tiered (risk-based) system could see different requirements for recertification of practitioners, proportionate to their level of risk.

Developing and introducing a new approach to assuring ongoing competence will be a significant piece of work for the Dental Council during the life of this plan.

### Objectives

- i. The framework for recertification is robust, evidence-based and proportionate in assuring lifelong competence of oral health practitioners.
-

## Strategic Priority 4: A capable organisation

Ensure the Dental Council has the policies, systems, skills, and processes to deliver our functions – smarter, more consistently and in accordance with our value and principles.

When it comes to operating efficiently and effectively, we need the right tools and capabilities in place.

The Dental Council is committed to having the systems, policies and processes necessary to deliver our functions, while minimising cost, compliance and complexity for practitioners.

Over the course of this plan, we will be systematically introducing new IT systems for financial management, information management, and document management. These systems will give us the functionality needed to operate effectively in the modern regulatory environment. This means, for example, making the best use of new technology to improve the way we do things and to provide simpler, smarter interaction with our stakeholders.

In addition, a significant focus for the short term will be on completing the policy review that began in 2014. Our aim is for all Council's policies to be current, relevant, transparent, and effective – applying the minimum regulatory force required to achieve our purpose and outcomes.

### Objectives

- i. Dental Council policies are current, relevant, transparent and effective.
  - ii. Dental Council systems support efficient and effective delivery of our functions.
  - iii. The Dental Council has the capabilities to deliver this Strategic Plan.
-

# Strategic Priority 5: Governance

## Review and refresh our governance model.

Effective governance is part of being an effective regulator. It builds confidence in our organisation, supports good decision-making and improves the quality of our regulatory actions – leading to better outcomes for the public and fairer impacts on practitioners.

Internal governance concerns the structures, standards of behaviour, roles and responsibilities (including delegations), accountability measures, oversight of business processes, financial reporting, risk and performance management that shapes how we carry out our functions – and how well. Our governance arrangements influence the operations of Council itself as well as the Chief Executive and Secretariat.

Some of the features of effective governance are:

- strategic focus
- shared vision and collective responsibility
- accountability
- responsiveness
- acting with integrity
- having competence and credibility
- transparent decision-making (as appropriate)
- understanding and reviewing our performance.

After more than a decade of operation, it is timely to take a fresh look at our governance arrangements to make certain we are demonstrating high standards for governance.

### Objectives

- i. Our governance model enables effective, efficient, strategic governance of the Dental Council.
-

# Measuring our progress

Performance measures are a means of evaluating whether we have achieved or are on track to meeting our goals. They are also a tool for ensuring our actions are focused on the right things to deliver better outcomes for the public.

Council reports to our stakeholders on our activities each year through our Annual Report. However, Council has also agreed to introduce a performance measurement approach that will help us better understand the effectiveness of the organisation and where we can improve.

The performance framework is based on a 'balanced scorecard'. It assesses our performance using a combination of soft, hard, internal and external measures. The measures will help answer questions about:

- The benefit we are delivering to our stakeholders
- Our ability to efficiently and effectively deliver our Strategic Plan
- Whether our strategies are the right ones to get better outcomes.

Over time, we intend to share a dashboard of these measures with our stakeholders as part of delivering on our commitment to transparency and accountability.

# Appendix One

## The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

Section 118 of the HPCA Act defines our specific functions. These are as follows:

- (a) to prescribe the qualifications required for scopes of practice within the [oral health] professions, and, for that purpose, to accredit and monitor educational institutions and degrees, courses of studies, or programmes;
- (b) to authorise the registration of oral health practitioners under the Act, and to maintain registers;
- (c) to consider applications for annual practising certificates;
- (d) to review and promote the competence of oral health practitioners;
- (e) to recognise, accredit, and set programmes to ensure the ongoing competence of oral health practitioners;
- (f) to receive and act on information from health practitioners, employers, and the Health and Disability Commissioner about the competence of oral health practitioners;
- (g) to notify employers, the Accident Compensation Corporation, the Director-General of Health, and the Health and Disability Commissioner that the practice of an oral health practitioner may pose a risk of harm to the public;
- (h) to consider the cases of oral health practitioners who may be unable to perform the functions required for the practice of the profession;
- (i) to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence, and ethical conduct to be observed by oral health practitioners of the professions;
- (j) to liaise with other authorities appointed under this Act about matters of common interest;
- (k) to promote education and training in the oral health professions;
- (l) to promote public awareness of the responsibilities of the [Dental Council];
- (m) to exercise and perform any other functions, powers, and duties that are conferred or imposed on it by or under this Act or any other enactment.