

March 2026

From the Chair

Dental Council

Te Kaunihera Tiaki Niho

At the Dental Council we have hit the ground running in 2026, welcoming new graduates to the register and reviewing the high number of informed responses from the proposed new registration pathways, sedation and accreditation consultations. Council will consider this feedback carefully before making decisions on the next steps.

At our February meeting, Council reappointed me as Chair, and Rosemary Fitzpatrick as Deputy Chair.

As part of our ongoing commitment to collaboration across the oral health sector, we also hosted a forum recently that brought together representatives from across the professions. The session focused on shared areas of impact and opportunities to support the delivery of safe, high-quality oral health in the public interest. We will publish information from these discussions next month.

We thank all practitioners for your continued dedication to the oral health of New Zealanders.



Ngā manaakitanga,

Dr John Bridgman

Chair



Consultations

Council has recently closed several consultations, and we are considering the submissions received alongside the proposals.

We have published the decision on the 2026/27 budget and fees consultation, and a Council decision is due shortly for:

- *Registration pathways and prescribed qualifications*
- *Sedation practice standard*
- *Accreditation*

[Consultations](#)



New graduates

Congratulations go to the graduates from the University of Otago and Auckland University of Technology oral health programmes. Council welcomes each new graduate to the oral health professions and wishes them further success as they begin their professional practice.

181 of these graduates have joined the register since the end of last year.



Practice Standard Audits

Council has recently issued practice standard questionnaires to randomly selected dentists and dental specialists. After each practising certificate renewal period, we audit 10% of each profession to ensure compliance with the standards framework and practice standards. A subset of those practitioners are randomly selected for a practice visit by a professional advisor, which is designed to be educative and informative.

[Standards Framework](#)

OHP renewals

Practising intention renewal forms for oral health therapists, dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic auxiliaries, clinical dental and dental technologists have been issued this month. Eligible practitioners are asked to provide a declaration on their compliance with their annual recertification programme when they complete their renewal form.



Responding to a privacy breach? Act fast and do the right thing

Patients place their trust in a confidential healthcare system, and oral health practitioners have a legal and professional duty to their patients to protect their information. If a patient's privacy is breached, for example, their information is sent to the wrong person or there has been unauthorised access to their records, you must respond quickly and honestly.

[Council's Patient records and privacy of health information practice standard](#), which is underpinned by the Privacy Act 2020, provides guidance on how to respond to a privacy breach. You can also check the [Privacy Commissioner's website](#).

Steps to take if there is a privacy breach:

Limit the breach immediately: Stop further access or disclosure (e.g. secure your systems, recover information). Consider getting help (e.g. IT or security support) if you need it.

- 1. Assess the risk:** Consider what information was involved and whether the breach has caused or could cause serious harm to the patient. Serious harm includes e.g. identity theft, financial fraud (such as unauthorised credit card use) and blackmail (such as threats to publish sensitive information).
- 2. Decide if it's notifiable:** If serious harm has occurred or is likely, the breach must be reported to the Privacy Commissioner. Use the [Privacy Commissioner's NotifyUs tool](#), a useful guide to self-assess whether the breach is notifiable.
- 3. Notify when required:** Tell those affected (patients or others) as soon as practicable if there's been a notifiable breach. If you haven't identified any serious harm or likely serious harm, consider telling patients anyway if not telling about the breach could pose some risk to them.
- 4. Prevent repeat breaches:** Review what went wrong, update procedures, and refresh staff training.
- 5. Document everything:** Keep clear records of the breach, actions taken, and improvements made.

[Privacy Commissioner guidance](#)

Te Whata Kura: new national antibiotic guidelines

Health New Zealand has launched Aotearoa New Zealand's first national antibiotic prescribing guidelines and interactive app, Te Whata Kura, to strengthen best practice in prescribing antibiotics and to combat rising antibiotic resistance. These guidelines provide consistent, evidence-based recommendations for both community and hospital settings, ensuring prescribers have clear, accessible advice to support safe and appropriate prescribing.

Oral health practitioners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these guidelines, as they include recommendations relevant to dental care and the responsible use of antibiotics in managing oral infections.



[Antibiotic guidelines](#)

Senior engagement

We are committed to working collaboratively with the professional associations that represent oral health practitioners. In the past month, Council Chair and Chief Executive met with NZIDT, NZOHA and NZDA to discuss regulatory priorities and issues that matter to their members.

In addition, we hosted 20 representatives from across the oral health sector to understand where we can best work together to support a safe, effective and well-connected oral health workforce. We will publish information from these discussions next month.

Plain language guides



We have published additional plain language guides to help oral health practitioners and members of the public understand Council's processes, and what to expect when interacting with us.

[Read the guides here](#)