

Magistrate rules against beauty therapist IN TOOTH WHITENING CASE

The outcome of a recent court proceeding that convicted a beauty therapist for harm caused as a result of tooth whitening, the ADA believes is a victory for patient safety. A Magistrate in Heidelberg, Victoria found a beauty therapist guilty of a charge under the Health Professions Registration Act 2005 (Vic) of practising dentistry while not being registered as a dental care provider.

A charge was brought against the beauty therapist after a customer who received tooth whitening in August 2007 complained of severe teeth mottling, a marbled colouration of her teeth, ulcerations of her gums, and chemical burns. This trial was the first time that the legality of tooth whitening was considered by an Australian court.

The ADA strongly believes that bleaching should only be done after patients have been fully assessed and warns the public that if you go to a non-dental practitioner to have your teeth whitened, then you do so at your own risk.

Federal President, Dr Neil Hewson said "You have to ask yourself - what is their infection control protocol? Are the bleaches safe? Is the strength of the bleach going to permanently impair my

teeth? What training do the operators have? Am I suitable for whitening? For the user of the service it is really a step into the unknown as they and the provider just do not have an appreciation of what they are doing."

The ADA has actively tried to educate the public that tooth whitening should only be performed by those that have the skills, knowledge and training to understand the anatomy and physiology of teeth and gums; can accurately diagnose the causes of dental discolouration; can diagnose oral health problems; and who comply with infection control.

Dental professional whitening treatments when performed by a dental practitioner (from professionally supplied gels through to in-dental clinic treatments) are an effective and safe form of dental treatment.

The court ruling will better protect the public by ensuring that tooth whitening is performed only by those that have dental training and are registered to practise tooth whitening.

Source: Media release, Australian Dental Association, 1 October 2009.