

Policy Statement 6.21 – Dentistry and Sustainability¹

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Australian Dental Association (ADA) and its member dentists have a long-standing commitment to ethical and professional standards and practice.
- 1.2 Environmental concerns and sustainability are important issues in Australia and are recognised as aspects of a wider commitment to socially responsible behaviour.
- 1.3 Sustainability in dentistry is multifaceted and involves many stakeholders including manufacturers, distributors, dental equipment technicians, dentists and staff, patients, waste collectors and processors.
- 1.4 The practice of dentistry in Australia requires maintenance of high levels of quality and safety which includes:
 - infection control, including utilisation of single-use materials;
 - energy consumption ; and
 - a complex set of waste management arrangements
- 1.5 Most dental equipment and materials are manufactured outside Australia and so incur significant carbon emissions related to transportation.
- 1.6 The Minamata Convention on Mercury (a multilateral environmental agreement that addresses the adverse environmental effects of mercury) was signed by the Australian Government on 10 October 2013. The Government is considering ratification to become a full party to the Convention.

Definitions

- 1.7 **SUSTAINABILITY** is maintaining or improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems.

2. Principles

- 2.1 High levels of quality and safety must be maintained in dental practices.
- 2.2 The environmental impact of dental care delivery should be minimised.
- 2.3 Sustainability of dentistry requires cooperation between the dental profession and other stakeholders.
- 2.4 Sustainability measures must be cost-effective.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Sustainability measures must not adversely affect the safety and quality of dental treatment.
- 3.2 The ADA and its Branches should ensure their facilities and activities are environmentally responsible.
- 3.3 Dental practices should be supported to be environmentally responsible (see Appendix: ADA Guidelines for Sustainable Dental Practices).
- 3.4 The ADA should work with other stakeholders to improve the sustainability of dental care delivery.
- 3.5 Environmental regulation must have demonstrably clear benefits, be evidence-based and cost-effective.
- 3.6 The ADA should develop a Dental Sustainability Charter.

Policy Statement 6.21

Adopted by ADA Federal Council, April 14/15, 2011.

Amended by ADA Federal Council, November 13/14, 2014.

Amended by ADA Federal Council, April 6/7, 2017.

¹ This Policy Statement is linked to other Policy Statements: 5.6 Dental Industry, 6.1 Infection Control, 6.11 Amalgam Waste Management & 6.20 Social Responsibility

1. Introduction

These Guidelines are designed to assist ADA members to improve the sustainability of their dental practices and take into account the regulatory requirements of dental practice and the current voluntary ADA dental practice accreditation scheme. Many of these measures will also reduce the overheads of a dental practice.

2. Clean Water

Dental practices, where practicable, should install amalgam separators complying with the current edition of ISO11143 Dentistry – Amalgam separators, and continue to recycle waste amalgam in accordance with the ADA Policy 6.11, Dental Amalgam Waste Management.

Radiographic developing fluids should be collected for correct disposal.

3. Water Management

- Collect the water bills for the last year to benchmark a water usage audit.
- Place interpretive signs about water conservation in staff rooms, toilets and surgeries.
- Maintain and repair taps or fittings.
- Use a non-water-based approach to cleaning where possible.
- Retro-fit flow controllers to key usage areas.
- Install 4-, 5- or 6-star water efficient appliances where appropriate.

4. Recycling

- Contact the local council regarding its services in order to optimise recycling.
- Provide clearly identified recycling bins for paper/cardboard and other materials in appropriate areas.
- Replace where possible paper copies with digital versions of records, accounts and correspondence.
- Correctly dispose of batteries, electrical equipment, ink and toner cartridges (for refilling/recycling), mobile phones, computers collected for waste and mercury-containing light globes.
- Using a shredding service that recycles.
- Consider recycling unwanted metal instruments, in order that they can be reused for industrial metal.

5. Reuse

- Paper in administration areas.
- Plastics containers, paper, shopping bags and boxes
- Reuse all single-sided paper after printing.

6. Reduction

- Implement a green purchasing plan to reduce materials entering the practice, by specifying recycled photocopy paper, unbleached toilet paper and recyclable cups.
- Achieve paper reduction via double-sided and grayscale copying and printing, electronic replacement of educational material, invoices, accounts, referral letters and other appropriate documents.
- Purchase stationery in bulk and order materials on a weekly or fortnightly basis in order to reduce packaging and transportation costs.

7. Surgery and Laboratory

- Limit the use of single-use items when possible, except for infection control (see Policy item 6.4 above).
- Utilise re-useable face shields.
- Re-use laboratory and postal boxes.
- Update operating lights to LED.
- Use biodegradable cleaning agents.

8. Energy Efficiency

- Collect the last year's power invoices to benchmark an energy audit.
- Have a maintenance regimen for cleaning light fittings, reflectors, heaters and air conditioners.
- Introduce: computer monitor sleep time, heating/ cooling switch-off, standby and shut-down regimens.
- Plan for natural airflow and sun control strategies.
- Introduce de-lamping/ re-lamping programs (for compact fluorescent & LED lights), movement sensor or timer lighting.
- Plan to maximise natural lighting.
- Reduce energy wastage via window coverings, draft proofing, double glazing and insulation.
- Use 4-, 5- or 6-star energy rated appliances e.g. LED computer screens.

9. Energy Renewables

- Consider utilisation of solar hot water, solar electricity panels and passive heating/ cooling systems.

10. eMeasures

When appropriate, use:

- digital imaging of radiographs and clinical photographs
- e-Newsletters
- digital records