

Dental Therapists



2017 Factsheet

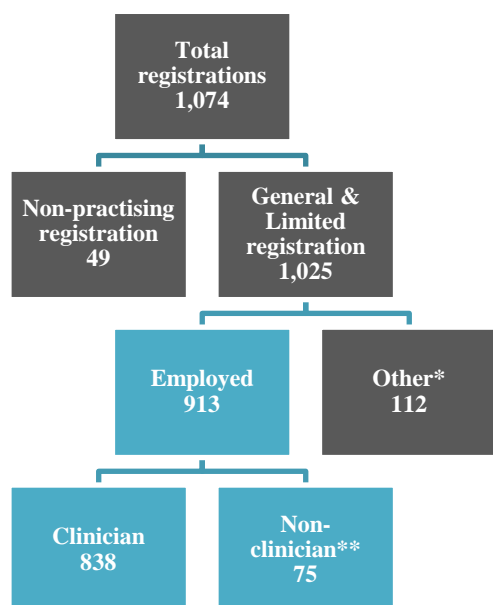
Dental therapists are registered healthcare practitioners who work within a structured professional relationship with a dentist to provide oral health assessment, diagnosis, treatment, management and preventive services. This may include performing and interpreting dental x-rays, dental examinations, making dental impressions and routine dental treatment. Dental Therapists generally treat patients under the age of 18, unless they have completed further training.

To gain registration as a dental therapist, practitioners must complete a minimum three year undergraduate program of study approved by the Dental Board of Australia.

The following analysis is drawn from the number of dental therapists with general or limited registration who were employed (913 in 2017) unless otherwise stated.

Workforce

Figure 1: Dental therapy registrations, 2017



*'Other' includes: working but on long leave, working outside the profession, looking for work, overseas, and retired.

**'Non-clinician' includes roles reported by survey respondents that did not fit predefined survey categories.

The number of registered dental therapists decreased by 10.5% from 1,200 in 2014 to 1,074 in 2017 (average annual decrease of 3.6%).

Table 1: Dental therapists, 2014-2017

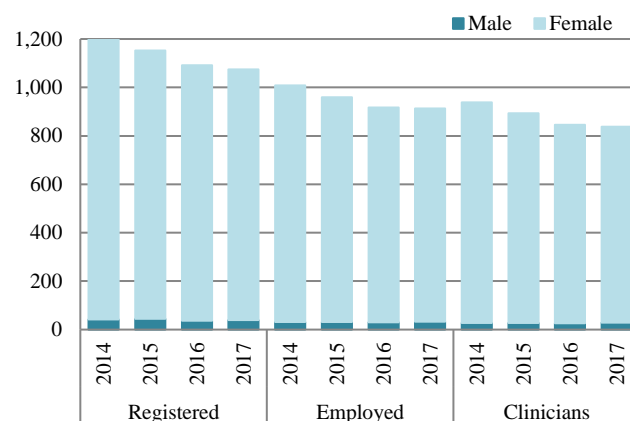
	2014	2015	2016	2017	Avg. annual growth
Registered	1,200	1,152	1,091	1,074	-3.6%
Employed	1,008	960	917	913	-3.2%
Clinicians	938	893	846	838	-3.7%

The number of employed dental therapists decreased by 9.4% from 1,008 to 913 over the same period (an average annual decrease of 3.2%).

Demographics

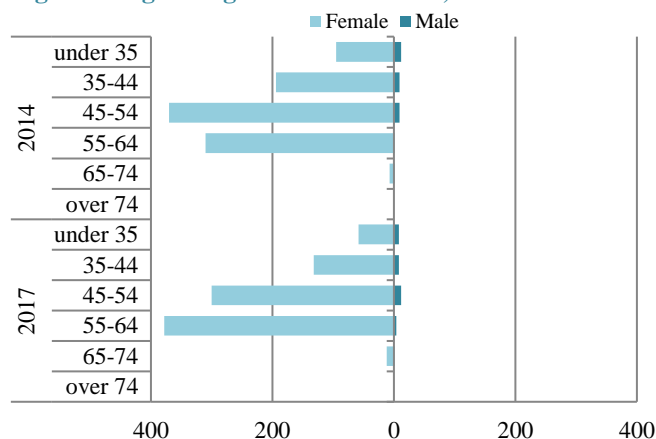
In 2017, 96.4% of dental therapists were female, a decrease from 96.8% in 2014.

Figure 2: Gender distribution, 2014-2017



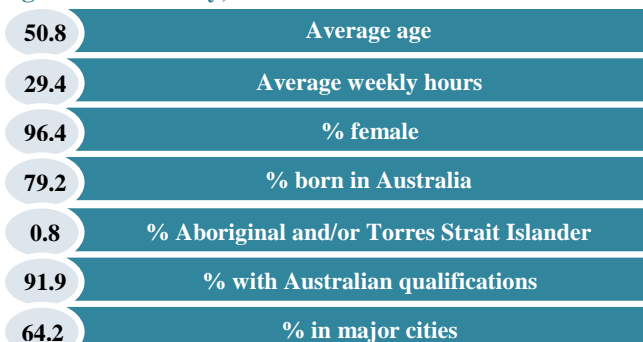
In 2017, the average age of dental therapists was 50.8 years, an increase from 48.4 years in 2014. Between 2014 and 2017, the proportion aged 55 years and over increased from 31.6% to 43.3%.

Figure 3: Age and gender distribution, 2014 and 2017



Quick Facts – 2017

Figure 4: Summary, 2017



Hours Worked

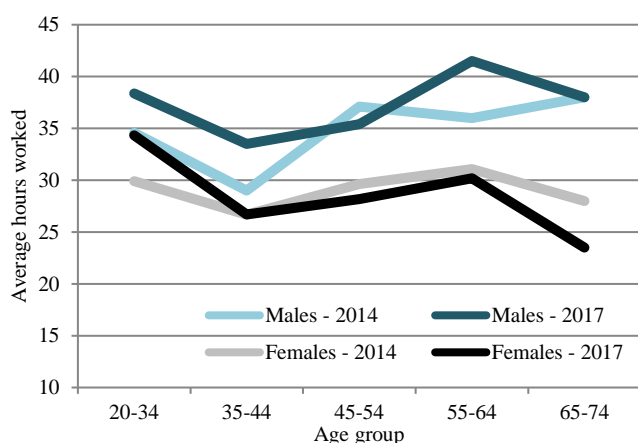
In 2017, dental therapists worked an average of 29.4 hours per week in total, and worked an average of 4.2 hours per week in non-clinical roles.

Table 2: Average hours per week, 2014-2017

Average hours worked	2014	2015	2016	2017
Clinical	25.4	25.1	25.0	25.2
Non-clinical	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.2
Total	29.7	29.7	29.6	29.4

In 2017, female dental therapists worked an average of 29.2 hours per week, a decrease from 29.5 hours in 2014. Male dental therapists worked an average of 36.5 hours per week, increasing from 33.9 hours in 2014. In 2017, males in the 55-64 age group worked the most hours, at 41.5 hours per week on average.

Figure 5: Average hours per week by gender and age group, 2014 and 2017



Job Role

Principal role

In 2017, 91.8% of dental therapists worked as clinicians in their principal role, a decrease from 93.1% in 2014.

Table 3: Principal role, 2014 and 2017

Principal role	2014		2017	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Clinician	938	93.1	838	91.8
Non-clinician	70	6.9	75	8.2
Total	1,008	100	913	100

Second job role

Table 4: Second job role, 2014 and 2017

Second job role	2014		2017	
	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Clinician	82	8.1	56	6.1
Non-clinician	25	2.5	16	1.8
Total	107	10.6	72	7.9

In 2017, 7.9% of dental therapists reported a second job role in dental therapy, a decrease from 10.6% in 2014.

Work Sector

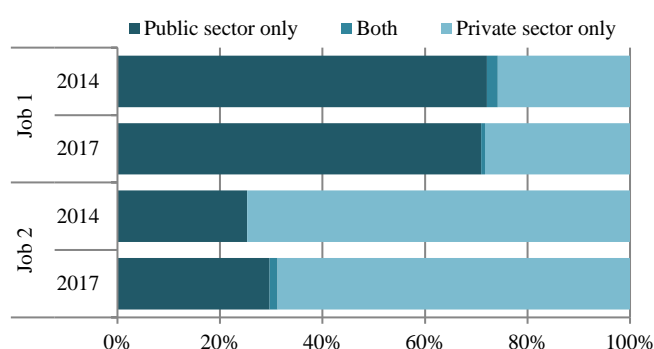
Principal work sector

In 2017, 71.0% of dental therapists reported that in their principal role, they worked only in the public sector - a decrease from 72.1% in 2014.

Second job role - sector

Of those dental therapist reporting a second job role in 2017, 68.8% reported they worked only in the private sector, a decrease from 74.7% in 2014.

Figure 6: Sector in which clinical hours were worked, 2014 and 2017



Note: 'Not applicable' responses are excluded from the chart

Work Setting

Principal Work Setting

In 2017, 58.4% of dental therapists worked in a Public clinic setting in their principal role, a decrease from 60.8% in 2014, and 17.7% worked in a Group private practice setting, an increase from 14.0% in 2014.

Table 5: Principal work setting, 2014 and 2017

Principal work setting	2014		2017	
	Principal role	Second job	Principal role	Second job
Public clinic	613	17	533	18
Group private practice	141	35	162	21
Solo private practice	112	28	90	25
Hospital	45	13	56	5
Tertiary educational facility	33	12	25	8
Remaining work settings	64	10	47	7
Total	1,008	67	913	49

Note: In this instance the principal work setting headcount for the reported second job does not equal the principal role for the reported second job. This occurs when the survey respondent indicates a second job work setting but not a second job principal role.

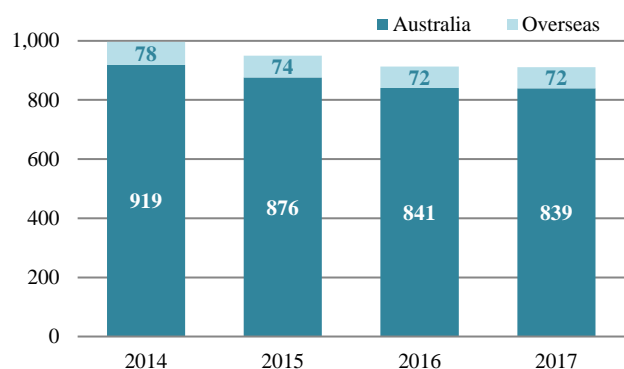
In 2017, dental therapists working in Health promotion services reported the highest average weekly hours (36.7) and those in Commercial/

business services reported the lowest average weekly hours (24.3). Both of these settings are included in 'Remaining work settings' in the table.

Initial Qualification

The workforce survey asks dental therapists where they obtained their initial qualification. In 2017, 91.9% of dental therapists obtained their initial qualification in Australia and 7.9% obtained their initial qualification overseas.

Figure 7: Initial qualification, 2014-2017



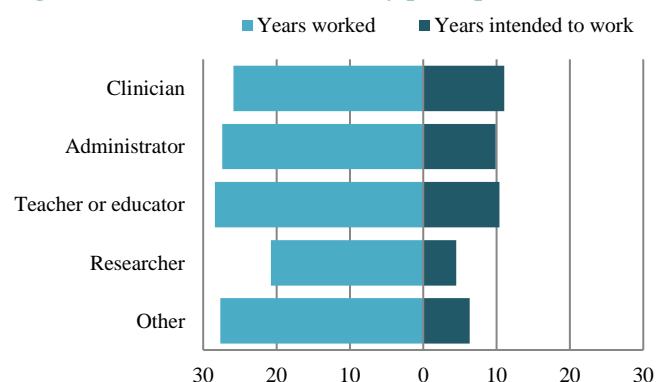
Note: 'Not stated/Unknown' responses are excluded from this chart

Working Intentions

In 2017, dental therapists had, on average, worked 26 years in the profession and intended to work for another 11 years. In 2014, dental therapists had worked 23 years on average, and had intended to work for another 12 years.

Note: the workforce survey asks how many years have you worked and intend to work as a 'dental practitioner'. Therefore all years reported may not refer to the dental therapy division.

Figure 8: Workforce intentions by principal role, 2017



Distribution

State and Territory

In 2017, the jurisdictions with the highest rates of full-time equivalent dental therapists per 100,000 population (FTE rate) were WA and TAS. Between 2014 and 2017, the total FTE rate decreased from 3.4 to 2.9 and the WA had the largest FTE rate increase (1.1).

In 2017, dental therapists in NT worked the most hours per week on average (33.0 hours) and those in WA worked the fewest (27.4 hours).

Table 6: Distribution by state/ territory, 2017

State / Territory	Headcount	Total FTE	Avg. total hours	² FTE rate per 100,000 population
NSW	170	131.6	29.4	1.7
VIC	139	106.6	29.1	1.7
QLD	171	141.3	31.4	2.9
SA	85	66.8	29.9	3.9
WA	270	195.0	27.4	7.6
TAS	45	37.5	31.7	7.2
ACT	14	11.8	32.0	2.9
NT	18	15.6	33.0	6.3
Total	913	707.2	29.4	2.9

Note: 'Not stated/Unknown' are excluded from this table but are included in the total

Remoteness Area

In 2017, 86.2% of dental therapists worked in either major cities or inner regional locations, compared with 85.1% in 2014.

Between 2014 and 2017, the largest shift in average hours worked was in very remote areas, decreasing from 35.6 hours per week in 2014 to 29.7 hours in 2017. However, the FTE rate in very remote areas increased 1.1 due to the increase in the number of dental therapists in these areas.

Table 7: Distribution by remoteness area, 2017

Remoteness Area	Headcount	Total FTE	Avg. total hours	² FTE rate per 100,000 population
Major cities	586	448.6	29.1	2.5
Inner regional	201	158.3	29.9	3.6
Outer regional	99	78.4	30.1	3.8
Remote	15	12.6	31.9	4.3
Very remote	12	9.4	29.7	4.7
Total	913	707.2	29.4	2.9

Note: 'Not stated/Unknown' are excluded from this table but are included in the total

Other Work Location Outside of Major Cities

In 2017, 8.8% of dental therapists reported that they had worked in a regional, rural or remote location, in addition to their principal or second job location. Of these respondents, 55.0% had worked in an inner regional or outer regional location, and 23.8% had worked in either remote or very remote locations.

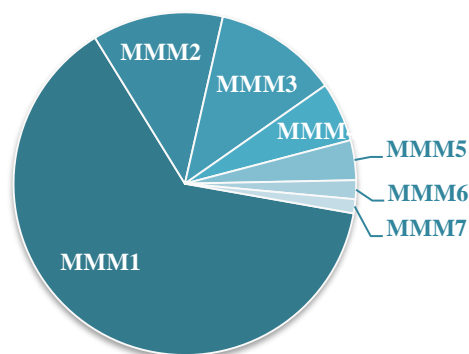
Modified Monash Model

In 2017, the majority (63.4%) of FTE dental therapists were located in a major city or a location considered as MMM1 under the Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification system, a small increase from 61.9% in 2014.

(See www.doctorconnect.gov.au for more information on the MMM).

MMM3 locations had the highest FTE rate of dental therapists (5.3) followed by MMM4 and MMM7 (both 4.5). The lowest FTE rate was in MMM5 locations (1.5).

Figure 9: FTE Distribution by MMM, 2017



Tele-Health

The workforce survey asks dental therapists to report their hours practiced via tele-health in dental therapy in the previous year.

A total of 57 dental therapists (6.2%) provided a response to the Tele-Health question in 2017. On average, respondents practiced via Tele-Health for 19.7 hours per week, with the majority (70.2%) of Tele-Health services provided by practitioners based in a major city.

Note: Tele-health is the use of telecommunication techniques for the purpose of providing telemedicine, medical education, and health education over a distance.

Table 8: Tele-health dental therapists by remoteness location, 2017

Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote	Very remote
70.2%	17.5%	8.8%	1.8%	1.8%

Note: The tele-health workforce remoteness location refers to the location of the Practitioner, not the location of the person receiving the service.

References

- 1) National Health Workforce Dataset (NHWDS): Allied Health Practitioners 2014-2017.
- 2) ABS - 3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2016-17, Released 31/08/18.

Notes

- 1) 'NP' denotes figures that are not published (supressed) for confidentiality reasons
- 2) The 2013-2016 NHWDS have been revised due to an error in recoding the missing values for job role. As such the figures may not match those that were previously published.
- 3) FTE number measures the number of standard-hour workloads worked by employed health practitioners. The FTE number provides a useful measure of supply because it takes into account both the number of practitioners who are working and the hours that they work. FTE number is calculated based on the total hours worked in a 'standard working week'. The standard working week is assumed to be 38 hours, equivalent to 1 FTE for all practitioners with the exception of medical practitioners where it is assumed to be 40 hours.

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