

NZOHA President Report 2024-2025

Tēnā koutou katoa,

It is an honour to present my report as President of the New Zealand Oral Health Association (NZOHA) for the 2024–2025 year.

This has been a year of both challenge and advancement. Navigating economic and recertification impacts. NZOHA has remained firmly committed to its mission: to amplify and unite the voices of dental therapists, dental hygienists, and oral health therapists across Aotearoa.

Despite the pressures facing our sector, we have stayed focused and proactive. NZOHA has continued to grow its impact as the national representative body for the oral health professions.

This year saw the successful continuation of monthly webinars and annual conference, offering members accessible, high-quality professional development and masterclasses. NZOHA continues to strengthen its partnership with BMS Insurance with a large portion on insured members. We are also excited about the recent launch of member access to the MIMS Drugs4Dent platform. These initiatives, alongside our advocacy and sector engagement, demonstrate our commitment to supporting members both professionally and practically.

Advocacy, Media & Submissions:

Advocacy remains at the heart of NZOHA's work. In 2024–2025, we significantly expanded our influence through high-impact submissions, media engagement, and direct policy advocacy. Our focus has been to protect and grow the scope, autonomy, and recognition of our professions—while ensuring the public can access safe, timely, and equitable oral health care.

Key submissions this year included:

- Te Whatu Ora – “Putting Patients First: Modernising Health Workforce Regulation”

NZOHA advocated for a streamlined and future-focused regulatory model while emphasising the importance of protecting distinct professional identities and scopes.

- **Dental Council – Proposed Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Practice Standard**

We supported practical, evidence-based standards and highlighted challenges in implementation across public and private settings.

- **Te Whatu Ora – Restructure Proposal: Oral Health Services**

Our submission outlined deep concerns about the proposed changes' impacts on clinical leadership, service delivery, and workforce morale. We called for the inclusion of oral health professionals at every level of service design and governance.

- **Formal request to ACC and Te Whatu Ora**

NZOHA requested a formal meeting to discuss enabling oral health therapists and dental therapists to register as ACC providers, particularly within Community Oral Health Services (COHS). This step would improve access to injury-related care and close funding gaps.

- **Amendments to the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCAA)**

We supported reforms that enhance flexibility and responsiveness in health workforce regulation, with strong advocacy for oral health to remain visible within all legislative updates.

Media Releases:

We released several key media statements this year, raising NZOHA's public and political profile:

- “Delays in Child Dental Surgery a Symptom of a System in Crisis” – Shining a spotlight on hospital waitlists and calling for upstream investment in prevention and workforce.
- “First Graduates of Adult Scope Programme” – Celebrating the inaugural class from the University of Otago and the positive impact of adult restorative scope expansion.
- Workforce shortages, graduate distribution, and funding inequities – Ongoing commentary across platforms emphasising the urgent need for national workforce planning.

Strategic Plan Development:

With the support of the Clare Foundation, NZOHA successfully developed its first formal Strategic Plan (2025–2027). This milestone provides clear direction and structure for the Association's future, grounded in member feedback and sector need.

Our five strategic pillars are:

- Advocacy & Influence
- Professional Development & Education
- Workforce Sustainability
- Equity & Inclusion

- **Organisational Strength**

The plan ensures our priorities are measurable, focused, and future-proof, laying the foundation for long-term impact.

Looking Ahead:

We are proud to confirm NZOHA's role in Congress 2026—a landmark national event co-hosted with NZDA (New Zealand Dental Association) and NZIDT (New Zealand Institute of Dental Technologists).

This congress will unite the oral health sector in a powerful, interprofessional gathering focused on innovation, clinical excellence, and sector leadership. Planning is well underway, and we are excited to create a new benchmark for collaboration across scopes and disciplines.

Your Executive is also developing an annual membership survey to gather valuable sector-wide data. This information will enhance our ability to present evidence-based positions in our advocacy efforts and strengthen our voice at local and national levels.

We will continue to advocate for recognition of our professions as ACC treatment providers, and for amendments to the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCAA)—particularly around reducing Annual Practising Certificate (APC) fees through a unified regulatory framework.

Acknowledgements:

To my fellow Executive members Samuel Carrington, Lizelle Koen, Melody Martin, Chris Han, Anishma Ram, and Lateisha Chant — thank you for your dedication, insight, and professionalism. Your contributions have shaped a stronger, more visible Association. To our members: thank you for your continued support.

Together, we have taken important steps toward a more visible, supported, and impactful oral health profession, and I look forward to what we will achieve together next.

Ngā mihi nui,

Anna Holyoake
President, NZOHA