New standard to be developed for sterile reprocessing in dental practices

By DTI

SYDNEY, Australia: Among the issues arising for small dental practice owners is adhering to regulations that are more applicable to larger institutions such as hospitals. In what the Australian Dental Association (ADA) is calling a “significant advocacy win”, Standards Australia has accepted a proposal to develop a new standard for sterile reprocessing of reusable medical devices and surgical instruments.

According to the ADA, it has lobbied for the past few years to prevent Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NSZ 4187 from becoming the required standard applicable to small office-based practices. The new standard that will now be developed over the next several years will replace both AS/NSZ 4187 and AS/NSZ 4185.

The decision follows a discussion on whether there was an ongoing need to maintain two different standards, given the conclusion over which standard applied in which setting, or if it would be preferable to move to a single document that would meet the needs of any situation where sterile reprocessing is required.

In response, newly elected ADA Federal President Dr Carmelo Bonanno praised the decision as an important positive step forward, noting that “AS/NSZ 4187 is a standard more applicable to large health care organisations and would have placed unreasonable demands on dental practices which would have resulted in increased costs for patients”.

It is envisaged that the single standard will be supported by a set of complementary implementation guides that will explain the application of the standard to particular settings. Throughout the development of the new standard, the ADA will remain closely involved and eventually align its own infection control guidelines to it once ready, however, until then the existing standards remain in place.