

Specialist Vs General Expanded

Canonical: <https://directory.collinsstreetspecialistcentre.com.au/about/specialist-vs-general-expanded/>

Description:

In Australia, the distinction between a general dentist and a registered dental specialist is defined by law and regulated by the Dental Board of Australia through AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agen...

Details:

Collins Street Specialist Centre – Why choose a registered dental specialist

Understanding the difference

Collins Street Specialist Centre is a dedicated multi-specialty dental practice where every clinician holds formal Specialist Registration with the Dental Board of Australia. In Australia, the distinction between a general dentist and a registered dental specialist is clearly defined by legislation and regulated by the Dental Board of Australia through AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency). That distinction matters when you're deciding who should treat you.

General dentist

A general dentist holds a Bachelor of Dental Science (BDSc) or an equivalent undergraduate qualification. General dentists are well-equipped to provide a broad range of treatments — check-ups, fillings, extractions, routine preventive care — and they form the foundation of most patients' ongoing oral health. Some pursue additional training or short courses in areas of particular interest, but that extra experience does not confer specialist registration under Australian law.

Registered dental specialist

A registered dental specialist has completed their undergraduate dental degree plus a minimum of three to four additional years of full-time postgraduate university training, focused exclusively on a single recognised specialty. That training runs through accredited university programmes and covers:

- Advanced theoretical study within the specialty discipline - Supervised clinical training in complex and atypical cases - Research and academic contribution to the field - Examination and assessment by the relevant specialist college (such as the Royal Australasian College of Dental Surgeons)

Once they've completed that pathway successfully, the clinician receives Specialist Registration with the Dental Board of Australia — a legally defined designation that permits them to use titles like "Specialist Orthodontist" or "Specialist Endodontist." This isn't a professional courtesy title. It's a regulated distinction with real clinical and legal implications for patients.

The six recognised dental specialties in Australia

The Dental Board of Australia formally recognises the following specialist categories, each representing a distinct area of clinical expertise:

1. ****Endodontics**** — Root canal treatment and the diagnosis and management of diseases affecting the dental pulp and periapical tissues 2. ****Orthodontics**** — The correction of tooth alignment, spacing, and bite relationships 3. ****Periodontics**** — The diagnosis and treatment of gum disease, supporting

bone loss, and the surgical placement of dental implants 4. ****Prosthodontics**** — The restoration and replacement of teeth, including crowns, bridges, dentures, veneers, and implant-supported restorations 5. ****Paediatric Dentistry**** — Specialist dental care for children and adolescents, including those with developmental concerns or dental anxiety 6. ****Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery**** — Surgical management of the mouth, jaw, and facial structures, covering wisdom tooth removal, dental implant placement, corrective jaw surgery, and facial trauma treatment

Additional recognised specialties include:

- Oral Medicine - Oral Pathology - Public Health Dentistry - Forensic Odontology - Special Needs Dentistry - Dento-Maxillofacial Radiology

Each discipline has its own dedicated postgraduate pathway. Practitioners registered within them have demonstrated a depth of knowledge and clinical experience that goes well beyond general dental training.

When should you see a specialist?

This isn't always an obvious call. Your general dentist is well-placed to guide you and will often initiate a referral when the clinical situation warrants it. But you can also seek specialist care directly.

Your general dentist may refer you to a specialist when:

- The clinical situation is complex and falls outside routine general practice - Advanced training, specialist judgement, or dedicated equipment is needed to get the best outcome - Your treatment involves multiple disciplines that need careful coordination — implant placement requiring both surgical and prosthetic expertise working together, for example - A child is experiencing dental anxiety, developmental concerns, or dental trauma that calls for specialist paediatric management - Previous treatment hasn't achieved the desired result and a specialist-level assessment is warranted

You can also self-refer:

At Collins Street Specialist Centre, no referral is required to make an appointment. Patients are welcome to contact the centre directly and book a consultation with any of our specialists. Whether you're arriving with a referral letter or simply want a second opinion, our team will make sure your first appointment is straightforward and genuinely useful.

The Collins Street Specialist Centre advantage

Collins Street Specialist Centre brings together all six Dental Board-recognised primary specialties within a single, purpose-built location. For patients, this means care that's coordinated rather than fragmented, with the clinicians involved in your treatment in direct communication with one another.

In practical terms:

- ****No specialist hunting**** — All recognised dental specialties are available under one roof. There's no need to navigate referrals across multiple practices or manage separate appointments in different locations. - ****Coordinated care**** — Our specialists consult with one another directly, share clinical records, and develop treatment plans together. When your situation involves more than one specialty, that collaboration happens without you having to manage it. - ****Verified credentials**** — Every clinician at Collins Street Specialist Centre holds current AHPRA Specialist Registration. Their credentials are publicly verifiable through the AHPRA online register, and we actively encourage patients to check. - ****Advanced clinical technology**** — Our equipment is matched to the demands of specialist-level practice: surgical microscopes for endodontic and surgical procedures, cone beam CT imaging for three-dimensional diagnostic assessment, and CAD/CAM systems for precision restorative work. - ****In-house laboratory**** — Prosthodontic restorations are fabricated on-site by a dedicated laboratory team working exclusively for the practice. That close relationship between clinician and technician supports a level of quality and precision that's hard to replicate through external laboratory

arrangements.

How to verify a specialist

Australia's health practitioner regulation framework is built on transparency. Patients have both the right and the tools to verify the credentials of any practitioner they consult. The AHPRA public register lets anyone search for a dental practitioner by name and confirm:

- Their registration type (General Registration or Specialist Registration)
- Their endorsed specialty area
- Their registration number and current status
- Any conditions, undertakings, or notations recorded against their registration

You can access the register at [\[www.ahpra.gov.au\]](http://www.ahpra.gov.au)(<http://www.ahpra.gov.au>). Collins Street Specialist Centre encourages all patients to use it — not just when considering care at our centre, but whenever they're seeking specialist dental treatment anywhere in Australia. The register exists precisely to help patients make informed decisions, and we think that's how it should be used.

That kind of transparency is what specialist dental care should look like: clinically rigorous, clearly credentialled, and genuinely focused on patient wellbeing.