



OHAA 2026 Awards

Award Criteria and Assessment Framework

Oral Health Practitioner of the Year

Purpose:

To celebrate an oral health practitioner (dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist) who has made a clear, practical difference to oral health in their community or to the profession — particularly through improving access to care, promoting oral health, and supporting colleagues or the Association.

Eligibility:

- Open to current members of the Oral Health Association Australia.
- Nominees may be recognised for work undertaken in any setting (public, private, rural, remote, or community).
- Previous winners of this award cannot be nominated again for the same work.
- Current Board Directors of the OHAA are not eligible for nomination.
- Candidates who have previously received recognition for the same project or initiative are not eligible to be re-nominated on that basis, but may be considered for new, distinct contributions.

Assessment Criteria:

Category	What to Look For (examples and guidance)	Assessment
1. Improving Access to Care	Evidence of real improvements in access — e.g., outreach or preventive services to rural or remote schools, Indigenous communities, aged-care or disability facilities, or refugee and low-income groups. May include mobile or after-hours care, collaboration with local health teams, or reducing barriers such as cost or fear.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Strong, proven improvement in access; long running or expanding work widely recognised in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some effective activity improving access for specific groups or regions. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Limited or unclear impact on access.



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2. Oral Health Promotion & Community Engagement	Delivery of engaging oral health education or awareness programs — e.g., school-based programs, health expos, social media campaigns, partnerships with councils, NGOs, or local health services; creating culturally relevant materials.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Ongoing, creative promotion with visible community reach or lasting changes in knowledge or habits. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some smaller-scale or periodic activities with positive feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Little or no engagement beyond clinical duties.
3. Innovation in Practice	Introduction of fresh, practical ideas — e.g., teledentistry, preventive care models, better recall systems, patient navigation tools, or integration with general health checks. Focus on solutions that actually work and are being used by others.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Proven, working innovation adopted by others or making clear improvements in care. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Creative idea showing promise or early results. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Concept untested or impact unclear.
4. Contribution to the Profession & the Association	Active contribution to the OHAA or professional community — e.g., serving on committees, mentoring students or new graduates, presenting at meetings, assisting in policy or advocacy, or promoting teamwork across professions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Recognised contributor or leader with sustained impact for the profession or Association. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some contribution or volunteer support at local/state level. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: No significant professional or Association involvement.
5. Measurable Community Outcomes	Clear evidence that the nominee’s work made a difference — such as more preventive visits, reduced untreated decay, improved oral health literacy, or strong community feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Tangible, documented results or strong stories showing lasting community benefit. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some good results or emerging positive evidence.



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		<input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Outcomes not demonstrated or unverified.
6. Sustainability & Collaboration	Work that continues beyond the individual, builds partnerships, or strengthens community capacity — e.g., links with public health units, schools, local governments, or NGOs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Work sustained or expanded through partnerships; others now involved or leading it. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Ongoing work with potential for growth. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: One-off or short-lived initiative.



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Early Career Award

Purpose:

To recognise an oral health practitioner (dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist) within the first five years of practice who has made a real-world impact in oral health. The award celebrates practical initiatives, innovative approaches, and community-focused work that sets a strong foundation for a lasting career.

Eligibility:

- Open to OHAA members within five years of initial registration.
- Open to practitioners working in any setting — private practice, public sector, community health, education, rural, or remote work.
- Previous winners of this award are not eligible.
- Current OHAA Board Directors are not eligible.
- Candidates who have already received an award or recognition for the same work or project are not eligible to be re-nominated on that basis, but may be nominated for new, distinct contributions.

Assessment Criteria:

Category	What to Look For (examples and guidance)	Assessment
1. Impactful Projects or Initiatives	Has the nominee led a project or initiative that made a visible difference in a community, clinic, or workplace? Examples: mobile clinic visits to a rural town, implementing a one-off preventive program at a school, introducing a culturally sensitive oral health initiative, or running a highly successful oral health promotion campaign.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Project clearly made a measurable or observable difference, benefited a community, and required initiative. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Project or initiative shows some tangible outcomes or promise for expansion.



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		<input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Minimal evidence of a real-world impact.
2. Innovation and Creativity	Did the nominee introduce a new, practical approach to oral health delivery, education, or awareness? Examples: new patient engagement methods, mobile outreach models, digital education tools, preventive care protocols, or integrated health approaches.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Innovation successfully applied, with clear results or adoption by others. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Creative idea showing potential for impact. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Limited innovation or untested ideas.
3. Rural, Remote, or Underserved Work	Has the nominee contributed to improving oral health in communities that normally have limited access to care? Examples: remote outreach clinics, community education in low-resource areas, volunteer initiatives, or programs targeting at-risk populations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Sustained or high-impact activity with measurable or clear benefits to underserved communities. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some engagement or one-off initiative with positive effect. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: No evidence of work in underserved communities.
4. Contribution to the Profession & the Association	Has the nominee supported the oral health profession early in their career? Examples: assisting OHAA events, mentoring students or peers, advocacy, raising awareness of oral health, or promoting teamwork.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Active contribution with lasting or visible benefit to peers or the profession. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some involvement or volunteer activity. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: No professional or Association contribution.
5. Demonstrated Outcomes or Community Benefit	Has the nominee produced clear results, even in a short-term or one-off project? Examples: number of people reached by education sessions, improved oral hygiene practices in a school or community, or patient engagement initiatives with measurable uptake.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Tangible outcomes with clear community or patient benefit; documented or well-supported. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some observable results or



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		evidence of positive effect. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Outcomes unclear, anecdotal, or not measurable.
6. Potential for Future Impact	Does the nominee show promise for continued contribution and leadership in oral health? Examples: initiatives that can be scaled, new ideas ready for expansion, or early recognition by peers or the community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Clear potential for ongoing impact; work or ideas likely to grow. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Evidence of potential but not yet fully realised. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Limited or no indication of future impact.



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Quiet Achiever Award

Purpose:

To recognise an oral health practitioner (dental hygienist, dental therapist, or oral health therapist) who quietly and consistently contributes to oral health care, education, or community initiatives. This award celebrates steady dedication, practical impact, and long-term influence, especially in areas where contributions often go unnoticed.

Eligibility:

- Open to OHAA members of any career stage.
- Nominees should not be widely recognised public figures or in the spotlight.
- Focus is on those whose impact is steady, long-term, and practical rather than high-profile.
- Previous winners of this award are not eligible.
- Current OHAA Board Directors are not eligible.
- Candidates whose work is already publicly celebrated may be less suitable.

Assessment Criteria:

Category	What to Look For (examples and guidance)	Assessment
1. Consistent Clinical or Community Contribution	Ongoing contributions recognised by colleagues, supervisors, or community members. Examples: running weekly preventive programs at a local school, working in remote communities, supporting oral health projects in a community health centre, maintaining community health programs, or delivering oral health workshops in rural towns.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Contributions consistently noticed and valued over time. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Regular contributions recognised by others. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Limited or occasional contribution.
2. Educational and Mentoring Efforts	Supporting peers, students, or community members through practical mentoring or education. Examples: mentoring new graduates, creating educational material, online	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Regular mentoring or education consistently recognised by others.



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	presence, running informal workshops in remote communities, or helping colleagues adopt better practical approaches.	<input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Occasional mentoring or teaching acknowledged by others. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Minimal or no educational contribution.
3. Practical Initiatives and Problem-Solving	Introducing or maintaining small improvements noticed by others. Examples: reorganising clinic workflow, streamlining patient scheduling, setting up mobile outreach schedules, or adapting oral health promotion activities for a specific community, education changes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Improvements consistently observed and appreciated. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some initiatives noticed by colleagues or community. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Limited practical contribution.
4. Longevity and Reliability	Demonstrated long-term dedication in behind-the-scenes roles. Examples: volunteering regularly for outreach clinics, maintaining programs over years, or providing continuity of care in remote communities, editorial work.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Contributions consistently recognised over time. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Reliable contributions over a moderate period. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Short-term or inconsistent effort.
5. Community or Workplace Impact	Contributions beyond individual patients — improving clinic culture, team function, or community oral health. Examples: contribution to a better workplace, looking at the bigger picture and excelling in unconditional contributions to the oral health practitioners profile, making a difference in communities and playing an established role in this (no one-offs, but consistent contributions, in it for the long run)	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Contributions consistently noticed and valued by peers or community. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some positive influence recognised by others. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Impact unclear or limited.
6. Initiative Without Spotlight	Work done quietly without expectation of recognition. Examples: volunteering behind the scenes for health events, coordinating small rural outreach initiatives, maintaining programs unnoticed by the public, or taking on extra responsibilities in challenging settings.	<input type="checkbox"/> Highly Recommended: Consistently proactive contributions recognised by peers or supervisors.



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Category	What to Look For (examples and guidance)	Assessment
		<input type="checkbox"/> Recommended: Some indication of quiet initiative. <input type="checkbox"/> Not Recommended: Work done primarily for recognition or minimal contribution.