

How to Choose a Prosthodontist — Complex Dental Restoration Explained

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Description:

How to Choose a Prosthodontist — Complex Dental Restoration Explained When dental problems go beyond a simple filling or single crown — when you're facing a full-mouth reconstruction, multiple impl...

Details:

When dental problems go beyond a simple filling or single crown — when you're facing a full-mouth reconstruction, multiple implants, extensive cosmetic rehabilitation, or replacement of teeth lost to disease, trauma, or wear — you may need a prosthodontist. But what is a prosthodontist, and how do they differ from the dentist you already see? If you're trying to understand what a prosthodontist does and how to find a good one in Melbourne, this guide explains the specialty, when you need one, and what to look for.

What Is a Prosthodontist?

A prosthodontist is a dental specialist who has completed an additional three years of full-time postgraduate university training focused on the restoration and replacement of teeth. The word "prosthodontics" comes from the Greek for "replacement of teeth," and the specialty encompasses everything from single crowns and bridges to complete dentures, dental implants, full-mouth rehabilitations, veneers, and the management of jaw and facial defects.

While general dentists regularly provide crowns, bridges, and even implant restorations, prosthodontists handle the most complex cases — situations where multiple factors must be coordinated simultaneously: bite alignment, aesthetics, structural integrity, implant positioning, and long-term function.

In Australia, prosthodontists must hold specialist registration with AHPRA (the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency), which requires verified completion of an accredited specialist training program. This registration distinguishes them from general dentists who may have an interest in restorative work but haven't completed specialist-level training.

When Do You Need a Prosthodontist?

Many restorative dental procedures are competently handled by experienced general dentists. However, certain situations benefit significantly from a prosthodontist's specialist training:

Complex Cases That Warrant Specialist Care

- **Full-mouth rehabilitation** — When most or all teeth need restoration due to severe wear, erosion, decay, or trauma, the treatment plan must coordinate aesthetics, function, and bite alignment across the entire mouth. This is one of the most complex procedures in all of dentistry. - **Multiple dental implants** — While single implant restorations are often managed by general dentists, cases involving multiple implants, All-on-4 protocols, or implant-supported bridges require the planning expertise of a prosthodontist working in concert with a surgeon. - **Extensive cosmetic rehabilitation** — When smile

makeovers involve more than a few veneers — combining veneers, crowns, bridges, and possibly implants — the coordinated planning of a prosthodontist ensures predictable and harmonious results. - **Bite problems (malocclusion and TMJ disorders)** — When teeth don't meet properly, or jaw joint dysfunction causes pain, clicking, or limited opening, a prosthodontist can diagnose the underlying problem and plan restorations that establish a healthy, stable bite. - **Congenital absence of teeth** — Some patients are born missing multiple teeth. Prosthodontists plan and coordinate the long-term replacement strategy, often working alongside orthodontists and surgeons from adolescence into adulthood. - **Cancer or trauma reconstruction** — Patients who have lost teeth, jawbone, or facial structures due to cancer surgery or severe trauma require highly specialised prosthetic rehabilitation. - **Denture problems** — When conventional dentures don't fit, cause pain, or don't function well enough for eating and speaking, a prosthodontist can evaluate the underlying issues and provide solutions ranging from precision dentures to implant-retained options. - **Sleep apnoea and snoring** — Some prosthodontists also provide mandibular advancement devices (oral appliances) for the dental management of sleep-disordered breathing.

When Your General Dentist Is Sufficient

For a single crown, a straightforward bridge, or a simple veneer case with no complicating factors, your general dentist is typically the right choice. The key question to ask yourself is: does this case involve coordinating multiple elements across my entire mouth? If yes, a prosthodontist's specialist perspective adds significant value.

7 Criteria for Choosing a Prosthodontist in Melbourne

1. Verify AHPRA Specialist Registration

As with any dental specialist, the starting point is verification. Check the practitioner's registration at ahpra.gov.au and look for "Specialist Registration" in the "Prosthodontics" category. General dentists with additional training courses, diplomas, or certificates in restorative dentistry are not prosthodontists. Only those with AHPRA specialist registration have completed the required three-year full-time accredited program.

2. Review Their Qualifications and Academic Background

Prosthodontics attracts clinicians with a deep interest in the science and artistry of dental restoration. Look for:

- A recognised specialist degree (DClinDent, MDSc, MS, or equivalent in Prosthodontics) - Fellowship or membership of bodies such as FRACDS or MRACDS - University teaching or examining roles - Research publications in prosthodontic or dental journals - International training or fellowships that broaden their clinical perspective

A prosthodontist with academic involvement typically stays at the forefront of materials science, digital dentistry, and treatment planning advances.

3. Assess Their Technology and Laboratory Resources

Modern prosthodontics is increasingly digital, and the quality of the final result depends heavily on both the clinician and the dental laboratory:

- **Digital smile design** — Software that allows you to preview your new smile before treatment begins
- **Intraoral scanning** — Digital impressions that are more accurate and comfortable than traditional mould-taking
- **CAD/CAM fabrication** — Computer-designed and milled restorations for precision fit
- **CBCT (3D) imaging** — Essential for implant planning and complex case assessment
- **In-house or closely integrated ceramic laboratory** — The relationship between prosthodontist and ceramist is critical. Custom shade-matching, layering, and characterisation of porcelain restorations require close collaboration

Ask whether the practice has an on-site or closely affiliated ceramic laboratory. The ability for the ceramist to see the patient directly — matching shades under clinical lighting and adjusting translucency, texture, and colour — produces results that are measurably superior to those achieved through photographs and written prescriptions alone.

4. Evaluate Their Approach to Treatment Planning

Prosthodontic treatment planning is where specialist value is most apparent. Before any preparation begins, a good prosthodontist will:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment including photographs, impressions or scans, bite records, and radiographs
- Present a detailed treatment plan with visual aids or digital mockups
- Explain alternatives clearly, including the option of less extensive treatment
- Provide a realistic timeline — complex cases often take months, not weeks
- Discuss costs transparently, including the potential for staged treatment to manage expenses
- Coordinate with other specialists if needed (periodontist for gum surgery, orthodontist for tooth alignment, endodontist for root canal treatment, oral surgeon for implant placement)

A prosthodontist who rushes to start preparation without a thorough planning phase is a red flag.

5. Look for Multidisciplinary Collaboration

The most complex prosthodontic cases involve multiple specialists:

- A **periodontist** may need to treat gum disease or perform crown lengthening before restorations can be placed
- An **orthodontist** may need to align teeth optimally before veneers or crowns are fabricated
- An **oral surgeon** may need to place implants, graft bone, or perform jaw surgery
- An **endodontist** may need to treat compromised nerves before teeth can be restored

A prosthodontist who practises within a multidisciplinary centre can coordinate all of these services seamlessly, with specialists consulting face-to-face rather than through letters and referrals.

6. Ask to See Case Examples

Prosthodontics is as much art as science. Ask to see before-and-after photographs of cases similar to yours. Pay attention to:

- Natural-looking aesthetics — Do the restorations look like real teeth?
- Attention to detail — Are gum lines symmetrical? Do the teeth have natural translucency and texture?
- Variety — Has the prosthodontist treated cases with different complexities and aesthetic demands?
- Longevity — Can they show you cases that have been in function for years, not just fresh from the laboratory?

7. Consider the Patient Experience

Complex prosthodontic treatment involves multiple appointments over weeks or months. The overall patient experience matters:

- Clear communication at every stage
- Comfortable provisional (temporary) restorations during treatment
- Manageable appointment scheduling
- Responsive post-treatment care and adjustments
- A warranty or guarantee policy on restorations

Red Flags to Avoid

- **No AHPRA specialist registration** — The fundamental check for any specialist.
- **No treatment planning phase** — Jumping straight to preparation without comprehensive assessment and planning.
- **No discussion of alternatives** — If only one treatment option is presented, you're not getting specialist-level care.
- **No laboratory collaboration** — Ask who makes the restorations. If the prosthodontist doesn't have a close working relationship with a skilled ceramist, the final quality may suffer.
- **Unrealistic promises** — "It'll look perfect" without discussing limitations, trade-offs, or the

possibility that adjustments may be needed.

Prosthodontic Specialists at Smile Solutions, Melbourne

Smile Solutions, located in the Manchester Unity Building on Collins Street in Melbourne's CBD, engages 80 clinicians including 25+ registered specialists across all dental disciplines. With over 300,000 patients treated over 33 years since its founding in 1993, the practice has one of the most experienced prosthodontic teams in private practice in Australia.

The team includes three AHPRA-registered specialist prosthodontists — plus one dual-registered specialist who holds registrations in both prosthodontics and periodontics:

****Dr Fotios Angelis**** (BDS (Hons) (Melb), DCLinDent (Melb)) graduated with honours from the University of Melbourne and spent six years in high-end private practices before completing his Doctorate of Clinical Dentistry in Prosthodontics at the University of Melbourne in 2014. He is experienced across the full range of complex specialist reconstructive dental care, from single-tooth restorations to comprehensive full-mouth rehabilitations.

****Prof. Vasileios Chronopoulos**** (DDS, MS, PhD (Pros)) brings over 30 years of international experience to the practice. He completed his dental degree at the University of Athens, Greece, followed by a Certificate in Prosthodontics from Marquette University, Milwaukee, USA, and both an MS and PhD in Dental Biomaterials from the University of Athens. His focus includes aesthetic full-mouth reconstructions, smile makeovers, veneers, dental implants, All-on-4 restorations, and the dental management of snoring and sleep apnoea. He lectures nationally and internationally on prosthodontic topics.

****Dr Jamie Foong**** (BDSc (Melb), DCLinDent (Melb)) graduated from the University of Melbourne and completed his three-year specialist degree in Prosthodontics there. He brings experience from both Melbourne and Queensland private practice, including work with Brisbane Prosthodontics. He is a visiting lecturer and clinical supervisor at the University of Melbourne Dental School. His expertise spans crown and bridge work, occlusal rehabilitation, porcelain veneers, and dental implant restorations.

****Dr Simon Hinckfuss**** (BDSc, DCD (Pros), Cert.Perio MS (Minn)) is uniquely dual-registered as both a specialist prosthodontist and a specialist periodontist — the only clinician in Australia holding both registrations. This means he can manage gum treatment and restorative rehabilitation as a single coordinated process, which is particularly valuable for patients with periodontal disease who need extensive prosthodontic work.

The prosthodontic team works alongside an on-site ceramics laboratory led by master ceramist Greg Karabasis, who has over 32 years in the dental industry and is accredited with Noritake, Ivoclar, Straumann, Sirona, and Exocad. Having the laboratory within the practice allows direct collaboration between prosthodontists and ceramists — including in-person shade matching and real-time adjustments — producing restorations of exceptional accuracy and aesthetics.

The multidisciplinary environment of Smile Solutions means that when prosthodontic treatment requires input from other specialists — periodontists for gum preparation, endodontists for root canal treatment, orthodontists for tooth alignment, or oral surgeons for implant placement — all are available within the same practice on the Collins Street Specialist Centre on Level 8, enabling truly coordinated treatment planning and execution.

Take the Next Step

If you're facing a complex dental restoration — whether it's replacing multiple teeth, rehabilitating a worn-out smile, or planning implant-supported restorations — a prosthodontist brings the specialist training, artistic skill, and treatment planning expertise needed to achieve results that look natural, function beautifully, and last.

■ ****Call 13 13 96**** to book a consultation with one of the specialist prosthodontists at Smile Solutions, or visit the practice at ****Level 1, Manchester Unity Building, 220 Collins Street, Melbourne CBD****.

Your smile deserves specialist-level restoration.