

Submission

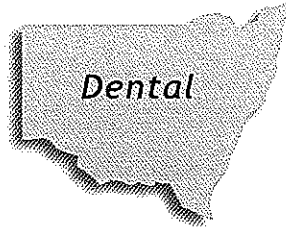
No 10

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLAINTS
HANDLING IN NSW**

Organisation: Dental Council of New South Wales

Name: Dr John Lockwood

Date Received: 7/02/2012



Dental Council of New South Wales

Level 6 North Wing 477 Pitt Street Sydney NSW 2000

Locked Bag 20 Haymarket NSW 1238

Phone: 1300 197 177 Fax: (02) 9281 2030

Email: mail@dentalcouncil.nsw.gov.au

Online: www.dentalcouncil.nsw.gov.au

7 February 2012

Leslie Williams MP
Chair
Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Williams

Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaints Handling in New South Wales

I refer to your letter dated 1 December 2011, seeking a submission in relation to the above inquiry.

Attached please find the submission from the Dental Council of New South Wales.

Dr John Lockwood
President



Dental Council of New South Wales

Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaints Handling in New South Wales

The Dental Council of New South Wales having received notification of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaints Handling in New South Wales submits the following comments.

The Council notes that the Inquiry will examine how complaints are handled with particular reference to:

- a) A comparative analysis of complaints lodged with the Health Care Complaints Commission by regional and metropolitan consumers, including the quantity and nature of complaints and consumer satisfaction; and
- b) Consumer awareness and understanding of the complaint handling systems and processes available to them both within the hospital system and in relation to external systems.

The Dental Council of New South Wales has statutory responsibility under the provisions of Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) to deal with complaints about the conduct, professional performance, health and competence (fitness to practise) of any dental practitioner employed in New South Wales and any dental student. The Council and the processes for responding to complaints about registered dental practitioners are set out in the Law.

The Council supports the Commission provided that it is more adequately funded such that dental complaints and Tribunals take less time to reach more satisfactory outcomes for public patients and practitioners.

A key issue for the Council has been the timeliness of the investigations and the formal submission of a complaint to the relevant Tribunal. It is understood that there are likely to be many factors impacting on the Commission's management of an investigation however, it is essential that these more serious matters are brought before the appropriate Tribunal within a reasonable timeframe.

Due to resource constraints the Commission is unable to undertake the numbers of investigations required and over recent years the Dental Council has been required to conduct an increasing number of investigations using Council resources. This is clearly impacting on the workload of the Council and staff engaged to support the Council.

Overall, the Council is satisfied with both the appropriateness of the assessment and investigative powers of the Commission and also the information sharing arrangements in place between the Council and the Commission. In the Council's view, the current circumstances provide an effective mechanism for dealing with the current level of complaints.

Dental Council of New South Wales

6 February 2012