

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation: The Illawarra Dental Health Action Group
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Date Received: 13/05/2005

Theme:

Summary



The Illawarra Dental Health Action Group

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CHAIRPERSON: Alice Scott Ph: 02 4271 2552

11th May 2005

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2500

Re: Submission to Inquiry into Dental Services in NSW

Having occupied the chairperson position of the above group for the last three years, I feel I am well qualified to comment on Dental Health.

From my observation in the Illawarra, Dental Health is a health problem in crisis. No amount of talking or blame-shifting between levels of government will fix it. It is a constitutional based issue for government at the Federal level. The only solution is for the current Federal Government to accept that their 1996 decision to axe the former dental health care program was disastrously wrong and needs to be urgently reinstated. There is a desperate need for more dentists to be trained as soon as possible with financial incentives to encourage people into the public system.

In the Illawarra a great number of clients have been waiting for many years to get dentures. Patients in nursing homes are having difficulty in accessing any dental services. Many of these people end up having to pay for treatment in the private system and are financially stressed with some needing to sell much needed assets to raise the dollars required.

Many of the patients waiting for dentures are in that predicament after finding that there was (and still is) no treatment available for early intervention. Unless you present with the trauma of bleeding, swelling or pain you will not be seen by a dentist in the public system.

There is strong evidence provided by NCOSS now that poor oral health has a detrimental effect on a persons general health. It can lead to further health problem such as premature births, post operative complications, diabetes, heart disease and many other things.

Whilst in my chairpersons position I have had contact with people who have resorted to pulling out their own teeth with pliers when they could not access a dentist or could no longer stand the constant pain. One lady who just a few years ago required a couple of fillings in her front teeth eventually came to ask our organisation for help. By this time all that remained of her front teeth were just black stumps. This situation came about because she lacked the essential pain and trauma symptoms that would have qualified her for treatment in the system before her teeth deteriorated to this dreadful state. A few dollars spent in the early stages would have been a far better financial strategy by any government than the costs that eventuated in this instance.

This is a shameful situation that one would imagine could happen in a third world country but not in a country such as Australia and needs to be fixed immediately.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alice Scott".

Alice Scott
Chairperson