

Submission
No 109

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation: Dental Technicians Association

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Theme:

Summary

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES.

OVERVIEW

I am responding to this inquiry as an invitation extended to the Dental Technicians Association. It is important to mention that the Dental Technicians Association does not represent the Dental Prosthetists, but the Dental Technicians Association was instrumental in Registering Dental Technicians in 1975 and in 1978 amendments to the Dental Technicians Act of 1975 to allow the admission of Registered Dental Technicians to become Dental Prosthetists.

The author of this document was the foundation President of the Dental Prosthetists Association from 1978 until 2000.

In August 1980, Dental Prosthetists entered the Dentures for Pensioners Scheme after negotiations with the NSW Government and the then Health Commission of NSW.

FEES

When Dentists were asked to participate in the Pensioner Denture Scheme, they were obliged to offer the department a discount on their

suggested fee schedule. I was President of the Association when we made representations to the Minister on behalf of members we were also asked to offer a discount.

Our fee then for a complete upper and complete lower set of dentures, was \$250.00 and we discounted our fee to \$210.00, or approximately 16%.

Currently the same complete upper and complete lower set of dentures costs on average \$1300.00, yet the fee for the Pensioner Denture Scheme for a complete upper and complete lower denture is only \$677.30.

In short, the parity between our professional fees and those of the Pensioner Denture Scheme has eroded.

For some years, Dentists and Dental Prosthetists are financially disadvantaged, which is why few Dentists and Dental Prosthetists participate in the scheme.

The agreement with the NSW Health Department states:

SCHEDULE OF FEES, " THE FEE RATES TO ITEMS IN THE SCHEDULE WILL BE REVIEWED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS IN CONSULTATION WITH THE AUSTRALIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION AND THE DENTAL PROSTHETISTS ASSOCIATION"

Discussions have taken place with the Department in the last 10 years but no satisfactory progress has been made to overcome the disparity in fee schedule

CURRENT SITUATION

The laboratory costs for a complete upper and complete lower dentures is in excess of \$700.00. The clinical time with the patient would average 2.5 hours of which the Prosthetist currently receives no remuneration.

Increased costs since the inception of the Pensioner Denture Scheme have risen dramatically as with other Health related professions. Rents, materials wages, superannuation and infection control procedures and O H & S have all become requirements since the original agreement.

OTHER MATTERS

As with all professions, qualifications have advanced. To be registered as a Dental Prosthetist, the first requirement is to be registered as a Dental Technician with the Dental Technicians Registration Board, then required to complete an Advanced Diploma Course in Dental Prosthetics for 2 years at the Sydney Dental Hospital.

Problems with the current Pensioners Denture Scheme

- Lack of funding.
- Waiting lists at Sydney dental hospital and country hospitals with dental clinics where patients can wait up to 3 years for new dentures.
- The distance patients have to travel irrespective if they lived in the country or the metropolitan areas.
- If public patients had the freedom of choice to go to either a Public

Hospital or a private practitioner who participate in the scheme, this delay would be eliminated.

- Public Hospitals where there are dental clinics should employ Dental Prosthetists allowing Dentists to concentrate on other roles of dentistry.
- In the case of a patient presenting for dentures at a Dental Clinic, Dental Prosthetists are qualified to access the patients needs which would save Dentists time, be more cost effective and speed up the process.

All these suggestions would help to overcome the shortage of Dentists.

Another consideration by the Government could be to introduce a co payment by the patient for dentures under the Scheme as applied by the Victorian Government

CONCLUSION

Hopefully the Committee will give due consideration to these proposals and I request the committee allow me the opportunity to address them personally on this submission