

Submission
No 218

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation:

Name: Ms Laurel Prince

Telephone:

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Theme:

Summary

19.8.05

Jan Busuwoods MLC,
Chair, Committee on Social Issues,
Parliament House,
McQuarrie St, Sydney 2001.

Dear Jan,

I trust you will accept this submission as I understand
the closing date was extended.

I worked in the Dental Research Institute at
the Sydney Dental Hospital in the early 1950s,
under Dr. Goldsworthy, as a biochemist and
also, carrying on my own research, on a special
aspect of gingivitis.

Since then, after teaching for some years, I
became involved in the Disability field after
one of my children was born with a disability.

This child is now 43 and has periodontitis,
after having a mouth of perfect teeth at 36 years
because of lack of staff training in dental care.
This area is completely neglected by DADHC
and that encompasses DADHC services & private

organisations funded by DADMC. DADMC doesn't regard dental care as an important part of general health care. Staff need training in how to provide quality oral hygiene techniques in assisting people with disabilities with their dental care.

It is DADMC's job to monitor all services providing residential care for people with disabilities to see that they provide appropriate healthcare.

As DADMC does not place any importance on dental care, they have not made it obligatory for staff in residential services for people with disabilities to be trained in quality oral hygiene techniques.

You can understand how upset I was, when I discovered that my disabled son, who lives in a residence, run by a large respected organisation, developed periodontitis. The staff are very caring & friendly, but often are uncomfortable helping people with oral hygiene & would appreciate training in this area.

How many other people with disabilities have suffered like my son from inadequate dental care?

Westmead Special Care Unit have recently started providing an excellent free training program for staff of residentials, in oral hygiene techniques.

Westmead S.C.U. has circulated many services for people with disabilities, about this free program. DADMC should insist the services use it.

P.T.O ->

There is an immediate need for Special
Care Units in all NSW regions, so that
disabled people don't have to travel
long distances for basic dental care,
and can hence regular check ups
to avoid serious dental diseases,
and the long waiting lists.

My own son travels 3-4 hrs for
basic dental care at Westmead's Special
Care Unit.

I would appreciate information about
the results of the inquiry and what
the NSW government intends doing
to rectify the poor state of
Dental Services in NSW.

Yours sincerely
Laurel Prince

Inquiry into Dental Services in N.S.W. Submission to Standing Committee on Social Issues.

The poverty of provision of Dental Services in NSW is scandalous. Since the abandonment by the Howard Govt. of the Keating's Federal funded Dental Health Service in 1997, low income earners, people in poor suburbs, people in rural areas, disabled people, pensioners have suffered appallingly from lack of availability of Dental Services.

The lack of funding has created a huge division between rich & poor. Only 240 dentists available to cater for 2.5 million people using public dental facilities, compared with 3000 dentists in the private sector.

People with advanced level decay & serious infections, are having teeth extracted unnecessarily because of lack of funding & staff to provide ongoing basic dental care. $\frac{4}{5}$ of children seen at Westmead Dental Clinic are from families that lack awareness of oral hygiene. They need regular check-ups & education in oral hygiene to prevent the current appalling rate of caries in those children. Many of those children are having all their teeth extracted because of serious disease and lack of ongoing regular care.

There is a serious shortage of dentists in public dental clinics. The University of

Sydney's Dental School (the only one in NSW) has had only half the number dentists graduating in the last 20 years because of funding cuts.

There is a shortage of Special Care Units in Public Dental Clinics. Special Care Units provide specialist dental care for people in nursing homes, institutions, disabled people, people with psychiatric illnesses. There needs to be a Special Care Unit, like the one at Westmead Hospital, in all Dental Clinics in Regional Hospitals in NSW. *The few that exist are underfunded & understaffed.

Oral health is an essential part of general health:
Poor oral health, lack of regular dental health checks & treatment can lead to an enormous financial cost. Teeth that have been neglected are very hard & expensive to fix. Poor oral health has been linked to diabetes, stroke, cardio-vascular disease & even cancer.

Improving the availability of dental care for the 2.4 million people in NSW, who use the Public Dental System, is a matter of great urgency. The NSW government must see that the level of dental health care that existed prior to 1997, is reinstated as a matter of great urgency. NSW politicians are callous, unfeeling and uncaring to have watched and ignored the appalling consequences of the deterioration

* Currently people & disabilities have to travel from regional areas in NSW to Westmead to the Special Care Unit.

in public dental services since the Federal government abandoned funding a dental service for all Australians.

Even though the Federal Government reneged on its responsibility, N.S.W. politicians should have ensured funding for the Dental Health service to continue, while they pushed the Federal government into negotiating with all the states for a national dental health system.

Right Now

- ① Public Dental clinics need adequate staffing so that every body using them can have regular quality dental care.
- ② Increasing the staffing levels needs to involve an incentive scheme to encourage some of the 3,000 dentists in the private sector, back into the Public Dental Clinics.
- ③ University of Sydney needs appropriate funds to train enough dentists for the future with an internship in Public Dental Clinics as a compulsory course component.
- ④ Special Case Units need to be set up in all Dental Clinics in Regional Hospitals

Laurel Prince