

Submission
No 111

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation:

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Date Received: 3/06/2005

Theme:

Summary

The Inquiry into Dental Services
The Standing Committee On Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St Sydney, NSW, 2000

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

3 JUN 2005

RECEIVED

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: The Inquiry By The Standing Committee On Social Issues Into Dental Health

I have long been concerned about the degrading state of dental health, dental service and dental education in NSW and welcome the Upper House Inquiry into this neglected area of health care.

I am aware of many people in our community who suffer significant pain and disability from poor dental health, and am dismayed by the lack of adequate services to relieve their pain and restore their lives to normal function. Tooth ache is not only intensely painful, but also prevents consumption of a normal diet essential for good health, as does the lack of proper dentures for those with missing teeth. Also, in a society where personal appearance is considered important, badly degraded teeth cause significant psychological trauma to many in our community. Further, there are links between general health including cardiovascular health and dental health, so that poor dental status is making our community sicker in more ways than one.

It is particularly worrying that there is continued degradation of education of dental health care workers at a time when the needs in the community are increasing. I am a volunteer tutor for post-graduate dental students at Westmead Hospital and witness of a weekly basis the lack of funding and support for dental education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels – it is a travesty. I would prefer to be paid but the hospital cannot afford this, and so donate my time to teach as my contribution to dental education in this state. In my time there I have witnessed the appallingly bad remuneration and conditions for public hospital dentists and this needs to urgently improved so that public hospitals have some chance of attracting and retaining staff any quality.

I am also concerned that people living in rural areas are often unable to find a dentist, despite being able to pay for service. The workforce challenges of decreasing training positions and increasing service need must be addressed by government.

Finally, I am concerned that despite there being many internal and external reports of these problems to both State and Federal governments, including a Senate Inquiry in 1998, very little seems to have been done to prevent the current and developing dental crisis. It is of note that despite an increase of about one billion dollars for NSW Health in the recent budget, no new funding for dental health has been allocated.

I hope that the current inquiry results in action being taken to address these concerns, and expect the State Government to accept its responsibility for ensuring adequate dental health, services and education in NSW.

Yours sincerely,


Peter Fatouris