

Submission
No 211

INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

Organisation: Institute of Dental Research

Name: Dr Roy Byun

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Date Received: 1/07/2005

Theme:

Summary

Dr Roy Byun
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The Standing Committee On Social Issues
Legislative Council, NSW Parliament
Macquarie St, NSW 2000

N 2145

Tuesday 21st June, 2005

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

Dear Sir/Madam

As a researcher in oral health I am fully aware of the current poor state of dental health, services and education in NSW. I am concerned that inaction by the State Government to address these problems immediately will further deteriorate the developing dental crisis, such that the prevalence of oral diseases in NSW, and the number of patients per dentist are among the highest in any developed country.

In particular, I am very concerned with state of dental health among Aboriginal people, who experience high rates of oral disease, often as result of a lack of adequate dental services and programs. I wish to contribute to the Upper House inquiry a recent research experience, where I was dismayed and appalled by the state of oral health in an remote Aboriginal community, outside Kempsey on the NSW central coast.

We undertook a research study to document oral health status and to collect plaque samples from members of an Aboriginal community. During the period, we never encountered an adult Aboriginal participant who had full dentition. Most of the adults were also found to be suffering from advanced caries in teeth that were irreparable and required extraction. Furthermore, most concerning was the high prevalence of advanced periodontitis in the adult population, as several studies show a strong link between periodontitis and cardiovascular disease, a major cause of death of Aborigines.

These oral diseases were not limited to the adult population. The majority of adolescents were found to be experiencing caries and showing early signs of periodontitis. In addition, many of the children examined also had caries in their primary dentition, and more importantly in their permanent teeth.

Several factors are responsible for the high rate of oral diseases observed in this Aboriginal community, including a lack of fluoridation in the town's water supply, lack of preventative dental education programs and the scarcity of dental services in the area. It was remarked that dentists in the area are fully booked two months ahead. It is most likely that other communities experiencing such dental shortages will have similar rates of oral diseases to those described above.

I sincerely hope that this Senate inquiry will result in swift and appropriate action in tackling the escalating burden of oral diseases affecting all people of NSW and provide future measures for preventing the state of dental health deteriorating to levels currently experienced.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy Byun', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roy Byun