

Submission  
No 148

## INQUIRY INTO DENTAL SERVICES IN NSW

**Organisation:**

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**Telephone:**

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

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

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

14 JUN 2005

RECEIVED

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

Dear Sir/Madam

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

I am aware of many people 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 missing teeth. Also, in a society where personal appearance is considered important, badly degraded teeth cause great disadvantage (in terms of job opportunities, stigma and poor self esteem) for many already experiencing significant disadvantage.

It is particularly worrying to me that there is an increase in the extent of untreated dental disease. I am also aware that this in part reflects a shortage of trained dental clinicians, with significant shortfalls predicted by 2010. I recognize that public dental services are patchy, with some areas receiving comparatively good care and most of the eligible population unable to access routine dental care in a reasonable time.

I am concerned that people living in rural and/or economically disadvantaged areas are often unable to find a dentist (even if willing and able to pay for a service). The lack of adequate preventive dental programs and insufficient fluoridation worry me, as prevention of disease seems even more important in the absence of enough dental clinicians to treat existing dental disease.

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 positive action being taken to address these concerns, and expect the State Government to accept its responsibility for ensuring adequate dental health, services and education for NSW.

Yours Sincerely,

